

Parental Involvement, Classroom Interaction and Educational Attainment among Secondary School Students from Single- and Dual-Parent Households in Lafia Metropolis

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Abstract

This study examined parental involvement, classroom interaction and educational attainment among secondary school students from single- and dual-parent households in Lafia Metropolis. The study adopted a descriptive survey design using a mixed-methods approach. The study population comprised 19,539 students drawn from 27 public secondary schools in Lafia Metropolis. Using Taro Yamane's formula at a 5% margin of error, a sample size of 392 respondents was determined. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed, involving the stratification of schools into junior and senior secondary schools, simple random sampling to select ten public secondary schools, and snowball sampling to identify students from single- and dual-parent households within the selected schools. A structured questionnaire and In-depth Interview Guide were used to collect data. The questionnaire was considered reliable after yielding 0.82 Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. Of the 392 questionnaires administered, 364 were retrieved, validated, and analysed using simple percentages and cross-tabulations with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The study revealed that students from dual-parent households reported higher levels of parental involvement in academic activities and demonstrated better classroom participation and greater confidence than their counterparts from single-parent households. Conversely, students from single-parent households reported relatively lower parental involvement and experienced more challenges in classroom interaction. The study concludes that active parental involvement is associated with improved classroom interaction and educational attainment among secondary school students. The study recommends that school administrators strengthen school-parent partnerships, communities support single-parent families, parents enhance home learning, and government increase investment in equitable educational opportunities.

Keywords: Parental Involvement, Classroom Interaction, Educational Attainment, Single-Parent, Dual-Parent, Students.

Introduction

Parents play an integral role in the academic and personal development of their children. The level of parental involvement, ranging from helping with homework to attending school events, is closely associated with students' educational outcomes. Escol and Alcopra, (2024) noted that parents' involvement in the learners' education positively

influences their success. It is a two-way street in which educators and families work together to prepare learners for success. According to Baumrind (1971), the way parents interact with their children, especially in terms of warmth and control, plays a vital role in shaping children's behaviour and learning capacity. Evidence from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) also shows that students whose parents actively monitor their learning, communicate with teachers, and participate in school activities generally demonstrate better educational outcomes than those with limited parental engagement (OECD, 2019). In the Nigerian context, Agbu, Cakıcı, & Baysen, (2023) observed that children from dual-parent households tend to experience more consistent academic support due to the combined efforts and resources of both parents. Conversely, single-parent households, which are often headed by mothers, may struggle with time and financial constraints, making it difficult to sustain high levels of involvement in their children's education. These differences show that family structure may be associated with variations in the educational attainment of secondary school students.

Moreover, the home environment created by either single or dual parenting extends beyond academics to shape students' social behaviours and interpersonal skills. Yuan (2010, as cited in Chavda & Nisarga, 2023) emphasized that children from stable, involved households tend to develop stronger communication skills and healthier relationships with peers and teachers. On the other hand, students raised in single-parent settings, especially those without sufficient support systems, may face challenges in their emotional and social development. Lee and Joo (2022) demonstrated that economic hardship and elevated parental stress in single-mother families frequently compromise parent-child closeness, increasing the risk of adolescent internalizing and behavioural problems in school settings. However, strong school connectedness can buffer these risks by mitigating the negative effects of disrupted home supervision and supporting social integration. In Nigeria, educational participation remains a challenge, with only 45% of adolescents of lower secondary school age and 35% of youth of upper secondary school age attending school (UNICEF, 2026). These realities underscore the importance of understanding the family and social factors that influence students' educational experiences. In a setting like Lafia Metropolis, where diverse family structures exist, it becomes important to explore how these differences are associated with students' interaction patterns and social adjustment in the classroom environment.

Given the increasing prevalence of diverse family structures globally and in Nigeria (National Population Commission [NPC] & ICF, 2019), it is essential to understand how family structure relates to students' educational outcomes. Globally, family structures have undergone considerable transformation, with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reporting a steady increase in single-parent households across many countries over the past two decades. In several OECD member countries, between 10% and 30% of children now live in single-parent families, although the proportion varies considerably across countries. In addition, the OECD's most recent Early Learning and Child Well-being Study found that, across participating jurisdictions, 94% of five-year-old

children lived with two parents, while up to 16% lived in single-parent households, reflecting the growing diversity of family structures internationally.

In Nigeria, family structures are similarly becoming more diverse due to factors such as divorce, separation, widowhood, labour migration, and non-marital childbearing (National Population Commission [NPC] & ICF, 2019). At the same time, the country continues to experience major educational challenges. UNESCO (2025) estimates that 273 million children and young people were out of school globally in 2024, representing approximately one in every six school-age children worldwide. Nigeria remains one of the countries with the largest number of out-of-school children, with an estimated 10.2 million children of primary-school age and 8.1 million children of junior-secondary-school age not attending school, showing the importance of understanding family-related factors associated with educational participation and attainment (UNICEF Nigeria, 2024). While dual-parent households are often associated with greater stability and support, the experiences of students from single-parent homes can vary widely depending on socio-economic factors and community support systems, (UNESCO, 2025). This study therefore seeks to examine the differences in parental involvement between single and dual parenting and how these differences are associated with the educational attainment of secondary school students. It also explores the social interactions of secondary school students from both family types within Lafia Metropolis, providing insight into the broader implications of parenting on adolescent development.

Statement of the Problem

Parental involvement remains a critical determinant of students' educational attainment, yet many Nigerian secondary school students continue to experience poor learning outcomes. According to the National Population Commission (NPC), 2020 and ICF (2019), a considerable proportion of Nigerian children live apart from at least one biological parent due to divorce, separation, migration, or death, a trend that has increased the number of single-parent households. At the same time, the National Bureau of Statistics (2022) reported that 63% of Nigerians (about 133 million people) are multidimensionally poor, with Nasarawa State among the affected states, a situation that places considerable economic pressure on families and may limit parents' ability to supervise learning, attend school activities, and provide adequate educational support. Although studies by Escol and Alcopra, (2024), Jeynes (2024) and Wang and Wei (2024) established that parental involvement positively influences students' educational attainment, they did not compare how parental involvement differs between students from single- and dual-parent households within the Nigerian context. Furthermore, while many Nigerian studies have focused on examination performance, limited empirical attention has been given to classroom interaction, despite its importance in promoting learning, confidence, and active participation. Do students from dual-parent families find it easier to form strong peer bonds due to emotional stability at home, or does resilience in single-parent children lead to stronger social networks? Little is known about these dynamics in Lafia's schools, making it

crucial to investigate how family structure influences peer interaction patterns, and ultimately, educational outcomes. Consequently, this study seeks to provide empirical evidence on how parental involvement differs between single- and dual-parent households and how these differences relate to students' educational attainment and classroom interaction in Lafia Metropolis.

Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study is to examine parental involvement, classroom interaction and educational attainment among secondary school students from single- and dual-parent households in Lafia Metropolis. The study is further guided by the following specific objectives:

- i. To examine the level of parental involvement associated with the educational attainment of secondary school students from single- and dual-parent households in Lafia Metropolis.
- ii. To find out whether there are differences in the interaction in class between secondary school students from single parents compared to those from dual parents.

Literature Review

Conceptual Clarifications

Four key concepts are fundamental to this study. These concepts are: parenting, dual parenting, single parenting and educational attainment. It is imperative to carry out a conceptual review for adequate understanding of these concepts and how is their applicability in this study.

Parenting

Parenting refers to the process through which parents nurture, guide, protect, and socialise their children to promote their physical, emotional, cognitive, and social development. Diana Baumrind (1971) identified four parenting styles, authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful, with authoritative parenting consistently associated with positive educational and psychosocial outcomes. Contemporary research emphasises parental involvement as a key dimension of effective parenting, including monitoring school activities, communicating with teachers, supporting learning at home, and providing emotional encouragement. Kim (2022), through a second-order meta-analysis of 23 meta-analyses involving 1,177 primary studies, found a positive association between parental involvement and students' academic achievement, with parental expectations and aspirations showing particularly strong associations. Similarly, Jeynes (2024), through a meta-analysis, reported that parental involvement consistently improves students' academic and social outcomes across different educational settings.

Single Parenting

Single parenting refers to a family structure in which one parent assumes primary responsibility for raising a child because of divorce, separation, widowhood, migration, or non-marital childbirth. Although single parents may experience financial, emotional, and time constraints, children's educational and developmental outcomes are also shaped by socioeconomic resources, family relationships, and the quality of parental support. A recent study by Gruning-Parache, (2024) found that children from single-parent families experienced poorer mental health outcomes than children from traditional two-parent families, while also demonstrating that socioeconomic status was closely associated with differences between family structures. Similarly, Pérez-Corral and Moreno Mínguez (2022) found that socioeconomic disadvantage is an important factor in understanding child deprivation among single-parent families. In Nigeria, demographic evidence from the National Population Commission (NPC) and ICF (2019) documents diverse child living arrangements, including children living with only their mother, only their father, or neither biological parent.

Dual Parenting

Dual parenting refers to the shared responsibility of both parents in providing emotional, financial, and educational support for their children. Effective dual parenting is characterised by cooperation, consistent supervision, shared decision-making, and active participation in children's learning. Recent evidence indicates that family structure is associated with children's educational and developmental experiences, although socioeconomic and family resources are important in explaining these differences. Park, and Lee, (2020), using nationally representative data on Korean adolescents, found that students from intact two-parent families reported higher perceived academic achievement than those from non-intact family structures. Similarly, the findings of Kim (2022) pointed out that parental involvement is positively associated with academic achievement, particularly where parents maintain high educational expectations and provide support for their children's learning. However, studies emphasizes that the quality of parental involvement is more important than simply having two parents in the household.

Educational Attainment

Educational attainment refers to the knowledge, skills, competencies, and academic outcomes acquired through formal education. It is reflected in students' academic performance, classroom participation, progression, and successful completion of educational levels. According to the OECD (2023) and UNESCO (2024), educational attainment is influenced by several factors, including parental involvement, school quality, and socioeconomic conditions. In this study, educational attainment serves as the key indicator for assessing how parental involvement relates to students from single- and dual-parent households in Lafia Metropolis.

Empirical Review

The empirical study is carried out according to the objectives of the study.

Level of Parental Involvement of Dual Parents vs. Single Parents on Children's Educational Attainment

Parental involvement remains one of the most consistent predictors of students' educational attainment across different educational systems. Recent empirical evidence indicates that students whose parents actively monitor learning activities, communicate with teachers, provide educational encouragement, and participate in school programmes generally attain higher academic outcomes than students whose parents exhibit lower levels of involvement. A second-order meta-analysis conducted by Jeynes (2024), synthesizing evidence from 76 quantitative studies, established those parental expectations constitute one of the strongest dimensions of parental involvement and significantly improve students' academic achievement irrespective of age, gender, race, or nationality. The study concluded that parents' high educational aspirations positively influence students' motivation, persistence, and academic performance.

Similarly, Wang and Wei (2024) conducted a meta-analysis involving 25 empirical studies and 42 independent effect sizes to examine the relationship between parental involvement and students' mathematics achievement. Their findings revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between parental involvement and academic performance. The study further established that the magnitude of parental involvement differs according to educational level, geographical region, and the specific type of parental participation, emphasizing that effective parental engagement extends beyond homework supervision to include emotional support, communication with schools, and educational expectations. Recent evidence equally emphasizes the importance of relational parental involvement. Escol and Alcopra (2024), using a quantitative, descriptive-correlational research design evaluated through mean, standard deviation, and Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation, established that high levels of active parental involvement directly correlate with stronger academic performance. Their analysis indicates that while family configurations like dual versus single parenting shape available resources, consistent parental engagement, specifically through structured home-learning support, continuous monitoring, and parent-teacher communication, remains the primary driver of student educational attainment regardless of household type. Furthermore, Jeynes (2024), established that warm parent-child relationships, positive communication, emotional support, and parental encouragement significantly improve students' academic achievement, classroom behaviour, and school engagement. The findings suggest that the quality of the parent-child relationship often contributes more to educational success than family structure itself. Within the African context, family structure remains an important educational consideration because many households continue to experience separation resulting from migration, divorce, widowhood, and economic pressures. Nevertheless, contemporary research increasingly demonstrates that educational attainment is influenced more by the

level of parental involvement than by whether students live in single- or dual-parent households. Children from single-parent families who receive consistent supervision, emotional support, and academic encouragement frequently perform comparably to their counterparts from dual-parent households. These findings support the argument that effective parenting practices can moderate the potential disadvantages associated with family structure. Nigeria presents a similar pattern. The Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey shows that substantial numbers of children reside with only one biological parent because of separation, migration, or the death of a parent, making parental involvement an increasingly important educational issue. Most studies on parental involvement and educational attainment were conducted outside North-Central Nigeria, with little empirical evidence from Lafia Metropolis (Jeynes, 2024; Escol, & Alcopra, 2024; Wang & Wei, 2024; Costa et al., 2024). While previous studies examined parental involvement and academic achievement, few have compared these variables among students from single- and dual-parent households within the same study.

Interaction in Class of Students from Single Parenting Homes vs. Students from Dual Parenting Homes

Classroom interaction is an important component of students' educational experiences because it reflects their participation in classroom discussions, communication with teachers, collaboration with peers, attentiveness during lessons, and engagement in learning activities. Recent empirical studies suggest that students' classroom interaction is shaped not only by school factors but also by family relationships, parenting practices, and parental involvement. Children who receive adequate emotional support, supervision, and encouragement from parents are generally more confident in expressing themselves, participating in group activities, and developing positive relationships with teachers and classmates. Jeynes (2024) found that relational parental involvement, characterized by effective parent-child communication, emotional warmth, and parental encouragement, significantly improves students' classroom engagement, school behaviour, and academic motivation. The study concluded that students who experience supportive relationships at home are more likely to demonstrate confidence, active participation, and positive interactions within the classroom environment. Likewise, Costa, Gomes, and Araújo (2024), in a systematic review of factors influencing secondary school achievement, identified parental support, family communication, and positive parenting practices as significant predictors of students' engagement in classroom learning, collaborative activities, and educational resilience. Their findings show that supportive family environments promote stronger classroom participation regardless of family structure.

Similarly, Wang and Wei (2024) observed that parental involvement positively influences students' motivation, learning engagement, and classroom participation. Their meta-analysis further showed that students whose parents maintain regular communication with schools and provide consistent educational support demonstrate higher levels of classroom confidence and academic engagement than those receiving limited parental involvement.

These findings suggest that parental involvement serves as an important mediating factor between family structure and students' educational experiences. Within Nigeria, recent studies have reported similar findings. Ogunkuade and Kenku (2022) maintained that secondary school students whose parents practice supportive, authoritative parenting, characterized by active monitoring, strong home support, and open communication, achieve significantly higher academic outcomes and demonstrate stronger educational engagement than those raised with low parental involvement. Similarly, Oni and Osuji (2024) reported that effective collaboration between parents and schools significantly improved students' classroom discipline, participation, and overall academic performance in public secondary schools. These studies reinforce the view that active parental involvement enhances not only educational attainment but also students' social adjustment and classroom engagement. Existing Nigerian studies have focused mainly on academic performance, paying limited attention to classroom interaction as an educational outcome. This study looks into these gaps by examining parental involvement, educational attainment, and classroom interaction among secondary school students in Lafia Metropolis.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Social Learning Theory developed by Albert Bandura (1977). The theory posits that individuals acquire behaviours, attitudes, values, and skills through observation, imitation, and reinforcement within their social environment. According to Bandura, children learn by observing the behaviours of significant role models, particularly parents, teachers, and peers, and by reproducing behaviours that receive positive reinforcement. Within the context of this study, parental involvement constitutes an important avenue through which students develop positive attitudes towards education, classroom participation, and academic achievement. Parents who actively supervise homework, communicate educational expectations, encourage learning, and participate in school activities model behaviours that children are likely to emulate. Although students from dual-parent households may benefit from the involvement of both parents, the theory recognizes that educational outcomes depend more on the quality and consistency of parental involvement than on family structure alone. Consequently, students from either single- or dual-parent households can attain favourable educational outcomes where parents consistently provide academic guidance, emotional support, and positive learning experiences. Social Learning Theory therefore provides an appropriate framework for explaining the relationship between parental involvement and educational attainment among secondary school students from single- and dual-parent households in Lafia Metropolis.

Methodology

A descriptive survey design with a mixed-methods approach was employed to examine parental involvement and educational attainment among secondary school students from

single- and dual-parent households in Lafia Metropolis, Nasarawa State. The study population comprised 19,539 students in 27 public junior and senior secondary schools (Ministry of Education, Lafia LGA, 2024). A sample of 392 participants was determined using the Taro Yamane formula at a 5% margin of error and 95% confidence level. A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted, whereby the schools were first stratified into junior and senior public secondary schools, after which ten schools were selected through simple random sampling using the fish-bowl method. The selected schools comprised Government Secondary School Tudun-Gwandara, Lafia; Government Science Secondary School, Lafia; Government College, Lafia; Government Secondary School Mairafi Islamiya; Government Secondary School Lafia East; Government Secondary School St. Williams, Lafia; Government Secondary School Agudu; Government Secondary School Ishaka Islamiya; Government Secondary School Bukan Sidi, Lafia; and Government Secondary School Agyaragu Tofa. Of the total sample, 373 students were selected from the ten schools to participate in the questionnaire survey, comprising students from single-parent and dual-parent households. Snowball sampling was used only to identify eligible students from the two parenting categories where necessary, making it a complementary technique rather than the primary sampling technique.

A total of 19 in-depth interviews were conducted making it a total of 392. Participants were purposively selected based on their roles and experience in secondary school education, social welfare, and community affairs. The participants comprised 2 principals, 1 vice-principal, 4 teachers, 3 Social Welfare Officers in Lafia LGA, 2 parents, and 7 community leaders. The interviews were conducted individually using a semi-structured In-depth Interview Guide, while responses were documented for thematic content analysis and presented verbatim where necessary to preserve their context and meaning. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and an In-depth Interview Guide. In line with Social Learning Theory, the instruments included items and questions capturing parental behaviours, support, communication, guidance, and patterns of interaction that students may observe and model in their academic and social activities. The questionnaire was subjected to expert validation, while a pilot study established its reliability using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.82. Ethical approval was obtained from the Department of Sociology, University of Jos with Ref: UJ/FSS/DS/10, while permission was sought from participating schools. Written parental consent and students' assent were obtained, and anonymity and confidentiality were assured. Quantitative data were analysed using simple percentages and cross-tabulations with IBM SPSS Version 26, while qualitative data were analysed using thematic content analysis through initial coding, categorisation, and theme identification.

Results and Discussion

A total of 392 questionnaires were distributed equally between students from single-parent and dual-parent households in Lafia Metropolis. After data screening, 364 questionnaires were found to be properly completed and valid for analysis, representing a 92.9% response

rate, while 28 questionnaires (7.1%) were discarded due to incomplete responses, multiple responses, or cancellations. According to Babbie (2021), a response rate of 70% or above is considered very good for survey research, while Latour et al. (2021) noted that a response rate above 70% is desirable for survey studies. Therefore, the 92.9% response rate obtained was considered highly satisfactory and sufficient for the analysis.

Table 1: Level of involvement between single parents and dual parents on the academic activities of students in Lafia Metropolis

Parenting * Level of Involvement of Parents on Academic Activities of Students
Crosstabulation

			Yes	No	Can't Say	Total
Group	Students with Single Parents	Count	118	60	4	182
		% within Group	64.8%	33.0%	2.2%	100.0%
		% within Can you say your parent is actively involved in your academic activities?	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	64.8%	33.0%	2.2%	100.0%
	Students with Dual Parents	Count	154	23	5	182
		% within Group	84.6%	12.6%	2.7%	100.0%
		% within Can you say your parent is actively involved in your academic activities?	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	84.6%	12.6%	2.7%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, 2024, extracted from IBM SPSS, v.26

Table 1 shows that 64.8% of the students with single parents affirmed that their parents are actively involved in their academic activities, while 84.6% of students with dual parents affirmed that their parents are actively involved in their academic activities. While comparing the two datasets, this indicates that students with dual parents have a higher percentage of affirmative responses, indicating that their parents are relatively more involved in their academic activities than those of students with single parents. Furthermore, responses gathered when respondents were asked to describe the level of involvement of their parents showed that the majority of respondents in both the single-parent and dual-parent categories were of the opinion that their parents were trying their best to provide for their educational needs. However, responses from students with single parents indicated that their parents were often busier with work, domestic responsibilities, and other commitments, which limited the time available to give their children the much-needed academic attention. In contrast, students from dual-parent households acknowledged the greater availability of their parents in supporting their academic

activities, although mothers appeared to be more actively involved than fathers. More so, in the interview conducted, one of the interviewees noted the following:

My experience is, as we have single parents and then dual parents, yes there must be a difference because in the single parent, it is only the mother or only the father that is there taking care of the child and his experience will be different from the one that is having the father and mother because two hands will be there to take care of the child, because the father will do his own and the mother will also do her own, so they will have experience of the father and that of the mother. But whereby that it is only the mother or the father, then the mother alone or the father alone that will be doing it. So, there is a difference between the levels at which the parents take care of the child at home.

On the difference in the level of involvement of single parents and dual parents and academic activities of a child, an interviewee who is also a single mother added that:

There is no difference... even if there is going to be a difference, the difference will not be much....because as the single parent will take care of his child, that is also how the dual parent will take care of his child. Because you cannot give birth to a child and leave the child like that, you must train him, is it?! And as you are training, even neighbours can help you train them, even in the school the teachers also help but it depends on how the parent train his child, either single or dual. ... it is discipline that will determine whether your child becomes a good child or a bad child.

Another Interviewee has this to Say:

For the single parenting, it has a lot of negative effect on the children because you will see that on how to sponsor the children is a problem; from the both parents, everybody will be shying away from his or her responsibility of taking care of the children. They will lack fatherly love because for them not to be together and put their hands together to take care of these children is a problem. For the children to be around their parents – both parents it gives them more attention and more courage that they have parents that are taking care of them. But when they are separated from each other, you will see that the children will be affected mostly because it is said that when two animals fight, the grasses there will suffer... the children tend to suffer from the effect. So, I think single parenting affect the children negatively in their educational attainment because the necessary things that are supposed to be done for these children to attend their educational pursuit will be lacking because the father who is supposed to take responsibility will be feeling the mother is not there who is supposed to give him a helping hand. So, the involvement of this parent becomes less and less. But on the other hand where we have dual parenting, you will see that the children will tend to enjoy their school pursuit better than the child who has only single parent. Another thing I observe, if the two parents are together, you will see that they put their heads together and the educational pursuit of the child becomes more tenable. So, my opinion is that, single parenting affects children negatively while dual parenting affects children positively.

Another Respondent in an Interview has this to Say:

From students background you will tend to see that students from dual parents perform higher, because the time given to the students in terms of care from home and love is different than those coming from single parenting. So, you will see that one parent will assist the other in one way or another to help the child. So, the difference in involvement has to do with time and level of education of parents and also involvement they put on the child. The emphasis they have for the students in terms of their educational performance. Parents don't usually have the value; they lack the value for the education of the children. any parent that does not have value, love or care for the child will not pay attention to the needs of the child....Single parents who are educated can help the child but not as much as those from dual homes because there is an adage that says, two heads are better than one, so two people having the same determination can compare to just a single person who has one determination in the academic performance of the child.

Following this, it can be inferred that students' educational attainment is associated with the level of parental involvement in their academic activities. The findings suggest that students from dual-parent households reported relatively higher parental involvement than those from single-parent households, although respondents acknowledged that committed single parents also make considerable efforts to support their children's education despite economic and time constraints. This finding is consistent with Jeynes (2024), who reported that parental involvement, particularly through educational expectations, communication, and participation in school-related activities, remains positively associated with students' academic achievement irrespective of family structure. Similarly, Wang and Wei (2024) found that students whose parents actively monitored learning, communicated regularly about schoolwork, and provided academic support recorded better educational outcomes than those whose parents were less involved. The findings also align with Park and Lee (2020), who found that family structure was associated with adolescents' perceived academic achievement, alongside differences in family support and related developmental factors. However, the interview responses further indicate that the quality of parental commitment, rather than family structure alone, remains an important factor influencing students' educational experiences.

Differences in the interaction of students in class between students from single parents compared to dual parents.

Table 2: Do you have any problem with how people interact with you?

Parenting Status	Yes	No	Can't Say	Total
Single Parents	108	68	6	182
% within Group	59.3%	37.4%	3.3%	100.0%
Dual Parents	60	101	21	182
% within Group	33.0%	55.5%	11.5%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, 2024, extracted from IBM SPSS, v.26

The data in Table 2 indicates differences in classroom interaction patterns between students from single-parent and dual-parent households in Lafia Metropolis. Specifically, 59.3% of students from single-parent households indicated that they experience problems with how others interact with them, compared to 33.0% of students from dual-parent households. Conversely, a higher proportion of students from dual-parent households (55.5%) reported that they do not experience interaction problems, compared to 37.4% of students from single-parent households. These responses imply that students from dual-parent households may experience relatively fewer challenges in their interactions with peers and other members of the school community.

Table 3: Do you sometimes find it hard to interact with your schoolmates and teachers in class?

Parenting Status	Yes	No	Can't Say	Total
Single Parents	92	82	8	182
% within Group	50.5%	45.1%	4.4%	100.0%
Dual Parents	82	91	9	182
% within Group	45.1%	50.0%	4.9%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, 2024, extracted from IBM SPSS, v.26

This finding shows that 50.5% of students from single-parent households admitted that they sometimes find it difficult to interact with teachers and classmates in class, whereas 45.1% of students from dual-parent households reported similar challenges. Although the percentage difference between the two groups is relatively small, the responses suggest that students from single-parent households may experience slightly greater difficulty in classroom interaction than their counterparts from dual-parent households. However, from the interview conducted, while interacting with a respondent in an interview, the interviewee has this to say:

Both single parents' students and dual parent students interact freely... I don't think there is anything like that. My children are free. They talk anywhere they are and ask questions whenever they want to ask but unless there are exceptional students who are affected differently or have a particular problem that we can say they will have problem in interacting. Similar to this, a respondent observed that:

... the level of interaction is different in school. Sometimes you see a student with single parent performing more than the dual parent because sometimes the student will look at his background, for the dual parent will feel that even if he does not achieve, he has parent but for the single parent, if I did not go to this school and perform, who will do it for me... so the child will be determined more than the one with dual parents. The single student work hard to cover the gap that he sees around him.

However, contrary to this, another respondent in an interview argued the following:

Uhm, you see, some of the single children are usually found to be timid in terms of education even though some of them are good or excellent performers but that of their interaction with

other people, it usually makes them to be uhm, held back, well reserved compared to those from dual parents because of the interaction they have at home.

Following these findings, it can be inferred that classroom interaction is influenced by several factors beyond family structure alone. While the survey responses suggest that students from single-parent households may experience relatively more interaction challenges, the interview responses indicate that resilience, personal motivation, and individual personality also shape students' interactions within the school environment. This finding is consistent with Jeynes (2024), who reported that supportive parental involvement contributes positively to students' confidence, social adjustment, and school engagement irrespective of family structure. Similarly, Wang and Wei (2024) found that students who receive consistent parental encouragement and academic support demonstrate better classroom participation and stronger engagement with teachers and peers. Furthermore, Chavda and Nisarga (2023) observed that although single-parent households may experience greater financial and emotional pressures, children's educational and social outcomes are influenced more by the quality of parenting and available support systems than by family structure alone.

Table 4: Frequency of Asking Questions in Class Between Students with Single and Dual Parents

Parenting Status * How Frequent Do You Ask Questions in Class?

Parenting Status	Very Often	Often	Not Often	Not at All	Total
Single Parents	38 (20.9%)	52 (28.6%)	72 (39.6%)	20 (11.0%)	182 (100%)
Dual Parents	78 (42.9%)	67 (36.8%)	27 (14.8%)	10 (5.5%)	182 (100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2024, extracted from IBM SPSS, v.26

The table shows that students from dual-parent households reported asking questions in class more frequently than students from single-parent households. Specifically, 42.9% of students from dual-parent households indicated that they ask questions very often, compared with 20.9% of students from single-parent households. Likewise, a larger proportion of students from single-parent households reported that they do not ask questions often (39.6%) or do not ask questions at all (11.0%), compared with 14.8% and 5.5%, respectively, among students from dual-parent households. Although these descriptive findings suggest a difference in classroom participation between the two groups, no inferential statistical test was conducted; therefore, the findings should be interpreted as indicating a modest difference rather than statistical significance. The findings are consistent with Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, which suggests that children acquire behaviours, attitudes and communication patterns through observation and interaction within their immediate social environment. Students who experience consistent encouragement and support at home may therefore be more willing to participate actively during classroom activities. This finding is also consistent with Jeynes (2024), who reported that positive parental involvement contributes to students'

confidence, school engagement and classroom participation irrespective of household structure. Similarly, Wang and Wei (2024) found that students who receive regular parental encouragement and educational support demonstrate greater classroom participation and stronger interaction with teachers and classmates. Furthermore, Chavda and Nisarga (2023) observed that children's educational and social outcomes are influenced more by the quality of parenting and available support systems than by family structure alone.

Discussion of Results

The findings relating to the first objective indicate that parental involvement differs between students from single-parent and dual-parent households. While 64.8% of students from single-parent households reported that their parents were actively involved in their academic activities, a higher proportion (84.6%) of students from dual-parent households reported similar involvement. These findings suggest that students from dual-parent households generally experience greater parental involvement in their education. Interview responses further support this pattern, as several participants explained that the presence of both parents often provides greater opportunities for supervision, shared responsibilities and encouragement towards learning. However, the qualitative findings also indicate that parental involvement is not determined solely by family structure. One interviewee, who is a single mother, explained that many single parents remain highly committed to supporting their children's education despite work demands and financial challenges. Another participant emphasised that discipline and parental commitment are more important than whether a child lives with one or both parents. These views support Jaynes (2024), who concluded that parental involvement remains one of the strongest predictors of students' educational outcomes irrespective of household type. Likewise, Kim (2022) found that parental monitoring, communication, educational expectations and emotional support consistently improve students' academic achievement across different family settings.

With respect to the second objective, the survey findings suggest modest differences in classroom interaction between students from single-parent and dual-parent households. Slightly more students from single-parent households (50.5%) reported experiencing difficulty interacting with teachers and classmates than students from dual-parent households (45.1%). Similarly, students from dual-parent households reported asking questions during classroom activities more frequently than students from single-parent households. Although these differences are descriptive rather than statistically tested, they suggest that students from dual-parent households may experience somewhat greater confidence in classroom participation. The interview findings, however, present a more balanced perspective. While some respondents believed that students from dual-parent households interact more confidently because they benefit from the presence of both parents, others argued that many students from single-parent households develop resilience and determination that encourage active participation in school. These responses suggest that classroom interaction is influenced by family support, individual motivation and parenting quality rather than family structure alone. These findings are consistent with

Wang and Wei (2024), who reported that students receiving consistent parental encouragement demonstrate better classroom engagement irrespective of household composition. Similarly, Chavda and Nisarga (2023) concluded that children's educational and social adjustment depends more on supportive parenting and available social support than on whether they come from single- or dual-parent households.

Conclusion

This study examined parental involvement, classroom interaction and educational attainment among secondary school students from single- and dual-parent households in Lafia Metropolis. It establishes that parental involvement is closely associated with classroom interaction and the educational attainment of secondary school students in Lafia Metropolis. Students from dual-parent households reported higher levels of parental involvement in their academic activities than students from single-parent households, reflecting the advantages of shared parental responsibility in providing supervision, academic guidance, emotional support, and monitoring of learning. Also, it is established that while family structure is important, the extent and consistency of parental involvement remain the defining factors in shaping students' educational experiences and attainment. The study also establishes that differences exist in classroom interaction between students from single- and dual-parent households. Students from dual-parent households exhibited higher levels of classroom participation, greater confidence in interacting with teachers and classmates, and a stronger tendency to engage in classroom discussions. Conversely, students from single-parent households experienced relatively more challenges in classroom interaction, particularly in participating confidently in class and maintaining effective engagement with teachers and peers. In essence, the level of parental support available to students extends beyond academic supervision to influence their confidence, communication, and participation within the classroom. Thus, it is affirmed that active parental involvement constitutes a critical element in promoting students' educational attainment and positive classroom interaction, while the collaborative support available in dual-parent households provides additional advantages for students' academic and social development.

Recommendations

In order to mitigate the challenges children from single-parents face which hamper their academic attainment, the following recommendations are forwarded:

1. School administrators should organise regular parent-teacher meetings, open days, and academic counselling sessions to encourage parents' active involvement in their children's education. Schools should also provide parents with regular updates on students' academic progress and attendance through meetings, letters, SMS, or WhatsApp platforms where available.
2. Teachers should regularly guide parents on simple ways to support learning at home, such as monitoring homework, encouraging regular study habits, and

maintaining communication with teachers. Parents should also be encouraged to attend school meetings and participate in activities that promote their children's academic development.

3. Communities, NGOs, and faith-based organisations should establish support programmes for single-parent families, including after-school lessons, mentoring programmes, parenting education, and educational assistance for vulnerable students. They should also collaborate with schools to provide counselling and other support services that enhance students' learning and well-being.
4. Parents should create a conducive learning environment at home by providing basic learning materials, setting aside time to monitor homework and study, and maintaining regular communication with their children about school activities and academic progress.
5. The Federal Government, Nasarawa State Government, and relevant education agencies should strengthen policies and programmes that promote parental involvement in education. They should also support vulnerable and single-parent households through school-based counselling services, educational support programmes, and targeted scholarships or bursaries to improve students' educational outcomes.

Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted in selected secondary schools within Lafia Metropolis, and the findings are interpreted within this context. The use of students' self-reported responses and snowball sampling to identify eligible participants from single-parent households may have had minimal influence on respondent selection. Nevertheless, the mixed-methods approach, rigorous data collection procedures, and reliability testing enhanced the credibility of the findings. The study employed descriptive statistics; future studies may complement these findings by applying inferential statistical techniques to determine whether the observed differences are statistically significant.

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