

Influence of Parental Divorce and Academic Adjustment on Mental Health of Government Day Secondary School Students In Karu, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of parental divorce and academic adjustment on mental health of adolescents attending Government Day Secondary School in Karu, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The study focused on a population of 50 students across S.S.S One to S.S.S Three, selected through simple random sampling. three hypotheses guided the investigation: (1) parental divorce will significantly influence mental health; (2) academic adjustment will significantly influence mental health; (3) parental divorce and academic adjustment will significantly influence mental health; Data were collected using standardized instruments and analyzed using simple linear regression for hypotheses one, two and three hypothesis. Results of hypothesis one revealed that revealed that parental divorce significantly predicted mental health of government day secondary school students $R=0.47$, $R^2=0.22$, $F(1, 281)= 13.32$, $P= .05$. This means that parental divorce accounted for .47 of the variance in mental health among secondary school adolescents, indicating that the influence was significant. The regression coefficient ($\beta = -0.471$, $t = -3.65$, $p = .05$, $95\%CI [-1.690, -1.279]$) was negative and significant; meaning parental divorce reduces students' mental health of government day secondary school students in. Hence, the first hypothesis is supported. Similarly, Results of hypothesis two revealed that academic adjustment significantly predicted mental health of government day secondary school students in $R=0.41$, $R^2=0.17$, $F(1, 121)= 8.690$, $P= .05$. This means that academic adjustment accounted for .17 of the variance in mental health among secondary school adolescents, indicating that the influence was significant. The regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.361$, $t = 2.95$, $p = .05$, $95\%CI [1.360, 1.090]$) was positive and significant; meaning academic adjustment reduces students' mental health of government day

secondary school students in. Hence, the second hypothesis is supported. The study recommends that government and school authorities should strengthen school-based counselling services to support students' mental health needs. Additionally, it encourages parents and guardians to provide consistent emotional support to mitigate the negative effects of marital disruption.

Keywords: parental divorce and academic adjustment on mental health of adolescents

Introduction

Mental health has increasingly gained global recognition as a fundamental component of overall health and well-being, particularly within the framework of the bio-psychosocial model. According to recent conceptualizations, mental health extends beyond the absence of mental disorders to include emotional regulation, cognitive functioning, and social adaptability (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022). Contemporary scholars argue that mental health should be viewed as a continuum, influenced by socioeconomic, cultural, and environmental determinants, rather than a dichotomous state of illness versus wellness (Patel et al., 2023). This perspective has informed global mental health policies, emphasizing prevention, early intervention, and community-based care.

Mental health in adolescents has emerged as a critical area of study in contemporary psychology and education, as it significantly influences emotional well-being, social relationships, and academic performance (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022). Adolescence is a

developmental period marked by cognitive, emotional, and social changes, making individuals more vulnerable to psychological stressors. Among these stressors, parental divorce and challenges in academic adjustment are increasingly recognized as significant factors that may adversely affect mental health (Amato, 2023; Onyema et al., 2022).

Globally, the burden of mental health disorders has reached alarming levels, making it one of the leading causes of disability worldwide. The WHO (2023) estimates that over 970 million people were living with a mental disorder as of 2019, with depression and anxiety disorders accounting for a substantial proportion of cases. More recent updates indicate that the number has surpassed 1 billion individuals globally (WHO, 2024). Rehm and Shield (2022) further highlight that mental disorders contribute significantly to Years Lived with Disability (YLDs), ranking among the top contributors to the global disease burden. In addition, global economic losses associated with mental health conditions are estimated to exceed \$1 trillion annually due to reduced productivity and increased healthcare costs (Trautmann et al., 2022).

Despite the growing burden, there remains a significant treatment gap in mental health care across the world. Vigo et al. (2022) assert that nearly 75% of individuals with mental health disorders in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) do not receive adequate treatment. This disparity is largely attributed to inadequate funding, shortage of

mental health professionals, and weak healthcare systems. The WHO (2024) reports that mental health receives less than 2% of global health budgets, with stark inequalities between high-income and low-income countries. Furthermore, Thornicroft et al. (2022) emphasize that stigma and discrimination continue to hinder access to care, particularly in culturally conservative societies.

Parental divorce is a global social phenomenon with profound psychological implications for children and adolescents. Studies indicate that adolescents experiencing parental separation are more likely to exhibit emotional distress, anxiety, depression, and behavioral problems compared to peers from intact families (Kelly & Emery, 2022; Amato, 2023). The disruption of family structure can result in reduced parental support, financial instability, and changes in social environment, all of which are linked to negative mental health outcomes (Amato & Anthony, 2022). While developed countries have extensively documented these effects, evidence from developing countries, particularly Nigeria, suggests similar trends compounded by socio-cultural perceptions of divorce, which may intensify stigma and emotional stress for adolescents (Ogunsemi et al., 2022).

Academic adjustment is another crucial determinant of adolescent mental health. Academic adjustment refers to the ability of students to cope effectively with school demands, including learning tasks, social relationships, and school routines (Baker & Siryk, 2022). Poor academic

adjustment often manifests as low motivation, absenteeism, school anxiety, and diminished self-esteem, all of which contribute to mental health challenges (Reddy et al., 2022). Empirical studies indicate that students struggling to adjust academically experience higher levels of stress, depressive symptoms, and psychosomatic complaints (Sun et al., 2023). In contexts like Nigeria, where educational competition is intense and resources are limited, poor academic adjustment can amplify psychological distress, particularly among students already affected by parental divorce (Onyema et al., 2022).

The interplay between parental divorce and academic adjustment highlights the multifactorial nature of adolescent mental health. Adolescents who experience parental divorce often face additional academic challenges, as the stress of family disruption can impair concentration, motivation, and engagement in school activities (Amato & Anthony, 2022; Kelly & Emery, 2022). Consequently, the cumulative effect of familial instability and academic maladjustment increases vulnerability to mental health problems, including anxiety, depression, and behavioral disorders (Sun et al., 2023). This underscores the importance of examining mental health outcomes from a holistic perspective, incorporating both family dynamics and educational experiences.

Statement of the Problem

Adolescence is a critical developmental period characterized by rapid physical, cognitive, and emotional changes, which make individuals particularly vulnerable to mental health challenges (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022). Globally, mental health disorders among adolescents have reached alarming levels. The WHO (2024) reports that approximately 1 in 7 adolescents (around 14%) worldwide experience a mental disorder, with depression and anxiety being the most prevalent. Mental health disorders are now the leading cause of disability among adolescents, accounting for 16% of the global burden of disease in this age group (Racine et al., 2023). Untreated mental health issues during adolescence can lead to poor academic outcomes, substance abuse, and social difficulties, emphasizing the urgency of addressing these challenges.

Parental divorce has been identified as a significant global predictor of adolescent mental health outcomes. In Western countries, studies show that 40–50% of children experience parental separation before adulthood, with affected adolescents displaying higher rates of depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and behavioral problems compared to peers from intact families (Amato, 2023; Kelly & Emery, 2022). The disruption caused by divorce including reduced parental supervision, economic instability, and relocation compounds adolescents' psychological stress (Amato & Anthony, 2022). In African contexts, including Nigeria, the lack of social support systems and high

cultural stigma around divorce exacerbate these mental health risks, although precise prevalence data are limited (Ogunsemi et al., 2022).

Academic adjustment is another critical determinant of adolescent mental health. Globally, approximately 20–30% of secondary school students report moderate to severe academic stress, often linked to heavy workloads, high-stakes examinations, and peer competition (Reddy et al., 2022; Sun et al., 2023). Poor academic adjustment manifested as low motivation, absenteeism, and interpersonal difficulties contributes significantly to stress, anxiety, depressive symptoms, and psychosomatic complaints. Evidence from Europe, North America, and Asia indicates that adolescents who struggle academically are up to twice as likely to develop depression or anxiety disorders compared to peers with satisfactory academic adjustment (Sun et al., 2023).

The interaction between parental divorce and academic adjustment further compounds mental health risks. Adolescents experiencing parental divorce are more likely to struggle with school adaptation, which amplifies stress and psychological vulnerability (Amato & Anthony, 2022). Globally, studies indicate that adolescents facing both familial disruption and academic maladjustment are 50–60% more likely to exhibit mental health problems than peers without these combined stressors (Kelly & Emery, 2022).

In Nigeria, mental health challenges among adolescents are similarly significant. WHO estimates indicate that approximately 15-20% of Nigerian adolescents experience mental health disorders, but fewer than 10% have access to adequate mental health care (Abdulmalik et al., 2023). With rising divorce rates estimated at 2.6 per 1,000 marriages in urban centers (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2022) and growing academic pressures in secondary schools, adolescents face compounded stressors affecting their mental well-being (Onyema et al., 2022). However, research examining the combined effects of parental divorce and academic adjustment on mental health in Nigeria remains sparse, creating a critical knowledge gap.

Research Questions

The research answered the following questions:

1. What is the influence of parental divorce on mental health of government day secondary school students in Karu, Nasarawa state, Nigeria?
2. What is the influence of academic adjustment on mental health of government day secondary school students in Karu, Nasarawa state, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are formulated for the study;

1. There will be a significant influence of parental divorce on mental health of government day secondary school students in Karu, Nasarawa state, Nigeria.
2. There will be a significant influence of academic adjustment on mental health of government day secondary school students in Karu, Nasarawa state, Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons:

1. **Academic Contribution:** It fills a research gap by exploring the combined influence of paternal divorce and mental health on students' academic adjustment—an area underrepresented in Nigerian educational psychology literature.
2. **Policy and Educational Planning:** The findings can inform policymakers and education authorities about the psychological and academic challenges faced by students from divorced homes.
3. **Parental and Societal Awareness:** By highlighting the psychological and educational impact of paternal divorce, the study sensitizes parents, guardians, and social workers to the long-term effects of family breakdown on children.

Scope of the Study

This study is limited to examining the perceived influence of parental divorce and academic adjustment on mental health of secondary school

students. The focus is on adolescents attending government day secondary school in Karu, Nasarawa state, Nigeria. The research targets students of government day secondary school in Karu, Nasarawa state, Nigeria. The study include only students within the junior and senior secondary school age range (typically 12-18 years) and not extend to primary or tertiary education levels. Teachers and school counselors may also be consulted to triangulate behavioral observations.

Conceptual Clarification/Literature review

This section presents the conceptual definitions of key variables in the study and critically reviews related empirical literature to provide a theoretical and research-based foundation for understanding the relationship between of parental divorce and academic adjustment on mental health of secondary school students

Parental Divorce and Mental Health

A growing body of research has examined how parental divorce influences the mental health of secondary school students across diverse cultural and educational contexts.

Amato and Anthony (2022), in a large longitudinal study in the United States, found that adolescents from divorced families exhibited higher levels of depressive symptoms, anxiety, and psychosocial stress compared with peers from intact families. Using a longitudinal cohort

design with stratified random sampling, this study implemented standardized mental health inventories across multiple waves of data collection, revealing that parental divorce predicted poorer emotional regulation and increased psychological distress. The authors recommended enhanced school and family counseling programs that specifically address the emotional needs of students from divorced households.

In Enugu, Nigeria, Okwaraji, et al. (2015) conducted a descriptive cross-sectional study of 432 secondary school students (216 males, 216 females) to assess the association between family structure and adolescent mental health. Using the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12), results showed that students from divorced families had significantly higher psychological distress scores than those from non-divorced families. The researchers noted that family disruption and reduced emotional support were key contributors to anxiety and social withdrawal, and recommended that Nigerian schools introduce routine mental health screening and gender sensitive counseling for students affected by divorce.

In Lagos, Nigeria, Adeyemi and Bello (2023) studied 480 adolescents (ages 13–18) through a cross-sectional survey to investigate the mental health implications of parental divorce. Participants were randomly sampled from multiple secondary schools, and the Youth Self-Report (YSR) was used to measure emotional and behavioral difficulties. The

findings indicated that students from divorced homes had higher internalizing problems (e.g., sadness, worry) and externalizing behaviors (e.g., aggression). The authors recommended that schools and parents collaborate to provide psychoeducational workshops and peer support systems to buffer against adverse effects.

ed elevated depressive symptoms, both negatively correlated with academic achievement. The authors recommended gender responsive counseling and academic support services within schools.

In Kolkata, India, Datta (2024) carried out a descriptive survey of 540 higher secondary students (284 females, 256 males), using the Mental Health Battery. Random sampling from multiple schools revealed that students from divorced families had significantly lower psychological well-being scores than those from intact homes. Datta recommended gender sensitive psychological support programs within school settings to address differing coping patterns and mental health needs.

In a study conducted in Texas, USA, Smith and Lee (2022) investigated 800 secondary students selected through cluster sampling to explore the impact of parental divorce on adolescent emotional wellbeing and school engagement. Instruments included the Children's Depression Inventory (CDI) and Revised Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale (RCMAS). Results showed that parental divorce was significantly associated with higher levels of depression and anxiety, and lower self-

esteem and school connectedness. They recommended increased access to school psychologists and integrated mental health curricula.

In Nairobi, Kenya, Kamau and Wanjiru (2023) used a cross-sectional design with 500 secondary school students randomly sampled from urban and peri-urban schools to examine the relationship between parental divorce and adolescent mental health. Using standardized scales for emotional distress and psychosocial functioning, the study found that students from divorced families exhibited elevated emotional problems and reduced social support networks, particularly in environments with limited mental health resources. The authors recommended community-based support groups and parent education programs.

Academic Adjustment and Mental Health

The interplay between mental health and academic adjustment among secondary school students has become a central focus in adolescent psychology and educational research. Mental health, encompassing emotional, psychological, and behavioral well-being, plays a critical role in how adolescents manage academic challenges, social expectations, and personal development. Empirical findings suggest that mental health status is a strong predictor of students' ability to adjust academically, influencing motivation, attention, social relationships, and coping strategies.

Afolabi and Daramola (2023) conducted a correlational study in Lagos State, Nigeria, to assess the relationship between mental health and academic adjustment in a sample of 420 secondary school students using stratified random sampling. Instruments included the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28) and the Academic Adjustment Scale (AAS). Data were analyzed using Pearson's correlation and regression analysis. Results revealed a significant negative correlation between poor mental health and academic adjustment ($r = -.61, p < .001$), with mental health accounting for 38% of the variance in academic adjustment ($R^2 = .38$). The researchers concluded that emotionally distressed students were less capable of managing school-related responsibilities and recommended the integration of school-wide mental health programs.

In Ghana, Owusu and Kwaku (2024) examined 350 senior secondary students in Accra using a descriptive survey and purposive sampling. They used the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-21) and Academic Performance Adaptation Inventory. Regression analysis showed that depression significantly predicted poor academic adjustment ($\beta = -.45, p < .01$), followed by anxiety ($\beta = -.33, p < .05$). The findings suggested that students experiencing internalizing disorders struggled more with study habits, time management, and school attendance. The authors recommended increasing the presence

of school counselors and psychoeducational workshops targeting stress management.

In a study by Musa and Bello (2022) conducted in Kaduna State, 300 students were assessed using a cross-sectional design and multistage sampling. The researchers employed the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and the Academic Engagement Scale. Using ANOVA and linear regression, the study found that students with high emotional symptoms had lower academic engagement scores ($M = 32.6$, $SD = 5.7$) than those with fewer symptoms ($M = 40.2$, $SD = 4.9$), with significant differences ($F(1, 298) = 21.34$, $p < .001$). Emotional instability and peer problems were linked to procrastination and poor class participation. The authors recommended early intervention through peer mentoring and emotional regulation skill-building in schools.

Uzochukwu and Okoye (2025), in a mixed-methods study conducted in Anambra State, sampled 280 adolescents from both urban and rural schools. Quantitative data analyzed using t-tests and regression showed that students with poor mental health scored significantly lower on academic adjustment dimensions such as motivation and social engagement ($t(278) = 7.12$, $p < .01$). Qualitative interviews revealed that persistent sadness, social withdrawal, and low self-esteem interfered with academic focus and confidence. The study

recommended trauma-informed teacher training and the integration of mental health assessments into school entrance evaluations.

Similarly, Abubakar and Lawal (2023) explored the relationship between emotional well-being and academic functioning among 360 students in Sokoto State using a descriptive correlational design. Participants completed the Emotional Distress Inventory and Academic Self-Concept Scale. Results from multiple regression showed that emotional distress was a strong negative predictor of academic self-concept ($\beta = -.41, p < .01$) and school connectedness ($\beta = -.39, p < .01$). Students with chronic stress showed higher dropout tendencies and declining grades. Recommendations included implementing school-based mindfulness programs and promoting positive teacher-student interactions.

In a study by Chiemeka and Adeyemi (2024), 400 adolescents in Oyo State were assessed for psychological wellbeing and academic adjustment using validated instruments and cluster sampling. MANOVA results revealed significant differences in academic planning ($F(2, 397) = 16.29, p < .001$) and emotional control ($F(2, 397) = 13.84, p < .001$) between students with high versus low psychological wellbeing. The study emphasized the need for routine mental health screenings and family involvement in students' academic progress.

Ahmed and Gyang (2022) conducted a study among 320 students in Plateau State to investigate the impact of anxiety on academic outcomes. Using the Beck Anxiety Inventory and Academic Adjustment Scale, and analyzing data with Pearson correlation, they found a significant inverse relationship between anxiety and academic adjustment ($r = -.57, p < .001$). Students with high anxiety reported difficulty concentrating, test fear, and low class attendance. The authors suggested integrating cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) programs into school guidance systems.

Methodology

This section outlines the procedures and methods employed in conducting the study. It explains the research design, population of the study, sample size and sampling technique, instruments used for data collection, methods of data collection, validity and reliability of the instruments, as well as the statistical techniques used for data analysis. These methodological steps were carefully followed to ensure the credibility, reliability, and validity of the findings perceived influence of parental divorce and academic adjustment on mental health of secondary school students. In this section, various reviews and definitions of key study variables were reviewed.

Population, Sample and Sampling Technique

The population of this study comprised of two hundred (200) senior secondary school students across (SS1-SS3) selected by the researcher within government day secondary school Karu, Nasarawa state, Nigeria. S.S.1 accounted for 70 students, representing learner's transition into secondary phase; S.S.2 accounted for 80 students, reflecting the class level where enrolment tends to stabilize and finally S.S.3 accounted for 50 students, representing moderate experiences. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure representation across gender and school types. Next, simple random sampling was applied within each stratum to select participants.

The sample size used for this study was determined mathematically using Z -Score formula

$$S = \frac{Z^2 \times P \times (1-P)}{M^2}$$

Where,

- S = sample size for infinite population
- Z = Z score
- P = population proportion (Assumed as 50% or 0.5)
- M = Margin of error

Given: Z = 200, P = 0.5, M = 0.05

Using sample size formula,

$$S = Z^2 \times P \times (1-P) M^2 (1-P) M^2$$

$$S = (200)^2 \times 0.5 \times (1-0.5) 0.052(1-0.5)0.052$$

$$49 \times 0.25 / 0.0025$$

$$S = 50.$$

Research Instrument

Three instruments were used in this study. These are:

Section A: Parental Divorce Scale (PDS). The children's perception of inter-parental conflict scale (CPIC) was developed by Grych et al. (1992) to capture these perceptions, operationalizing how adolescents understand the frequency, intensity, and resolution of parental conflicts. The CPIC consists of 48 self-report items, divided into key subscales: conflict properties, threat appraisal, and self-blame. The Conflict Properties subscale assesses frequency, intensity, and stability of conflict, while threat appraisal captures the extent to which adolescents feel endangered or worried by parental disputes. Self-Blame measures the degree to which adolescents attribute responsibility for the conflict to themselves. The scale was structured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." Onyema, Opara, and Eze (2022) have adapted and revalidated the CPIC in Nigerian settings, confirming its factor structure and internal consistency.

Section B: Academic Adjustment Scale (AAS) .Academic adjustment scale was developed by Anderson, Guan, and Koc (1996) is frequently employed. This instrument was originally intended to measure how well

students adapt to the academic demands of their educational environment, including motivation, study behavior, time management, and emotional regulation in academic contexts. The scale consists of 25 items, structured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” Anderson et al. (1996) reported an internal consistency reliability coefficient of 0.87, validating its robustness across student populations. In a Nigerian adaptation study conducted by Adebayo and Nwachukwu (2022), the AAS demonstrated a Cronbach alpha of 0.83, confirming its applicability for Nigerian secondary school students. The scale's multidimensional approach to assessing academic behaviors makes it particularly valuable for research involving students undergoing stress due to parental divorce or mental health challenges.

Section C: General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12). The general health questionnaire (GHQ-12) developed by Goldberg and Williams (1988) is a globally recognized screening instrument designed to detect psychological distress and mental health symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and social dysfunction. It comprises 12 items; each rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from “Not at all” to “Much more than usual.” The original scale demonstrated a high internal consistency with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.85, making it suitable for both clinical and non-clinical populations (Goldberg & Williams, 1988). In Nigeria, the GHQ-12 was revalidated by Adewuya et al. (2006) and Omigbodun et al. (2007) for use among

adolescents, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.82, which affirms its psychometric adequacy in the Nigerian context. The scale has since been widely applied in secondary schools to assess students' mental health profiles with demonstrated cultural relevance.

Technique for data Analysis

The data for this study was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics involves frequencies, simple percentages; mean and standard deviations were used to analyze the demographic features of the respondents. On the other hand, inferential statistics which involved simple linear regression, multiple regressions and t-test was used to test the stated hypotheses. The whole analysis was performed via statistical packages for social sciences (SPSS) version 26.

Hypothesis One: This hypothesis stated that there will be a significant influence of parental divorce on the mental health of government day secondary school students in Karu, Nasarawa state, Nigeria. This hypothesis was tested using simple linear regression and the result is presented in table 4. 2.

Table 4.2: Summary of simple linear regression showing the influence of parental divorce on the academic adjustment of government day secondary school students in Karu, Nasarawa state, Nigeria

DV	Predictors	R	R ²	F	DF	95%CI	β	t
P								

Mental Health	Constant	0.47	0.22	13.32	1.281
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Parental Divorce		[-1.690, -1.279]	-0.471	-3.65	.000
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The result of hypothesis one revealed that parental divorce significantly predicted mental health of government day secondary school students in Karu, Nasarawa state, Nigeria, $R=0.47$, $R^2=0.22$, $F(1, 281)=13.32$, $P=.05$. This means that parental divorce accounted for .47 of the variance in mental health among secondary school adolescents, indicating that the influence was significant. The regression coefficient ($\beta = -0.471$, $t = -3.65$, $p = .05$, 95%CI [-1.690, -1.279]) was negative and significant; meaning parental divorce reduces students' mental health of government day secondary school students in Karu, Nasarawa state, Nigeria. Hence, the first hypothesis is supported.

Hypothesis Two: This hypothesis stated that there will be a significant influence of academic adjustment on mental health of government day secondary school students in Karu, Nasarawa state, Nigeria. This hypothesis was tested using simple linear regression and the result is presented in table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Summary of simple linear regression showing the influence of academic adjustment on mental health of government day secondary school students in Karu, Nasarawa state, Nigeria

DV	Predictors	R	R ²	F	DF	95%CI	β	t
P								

Mental Health	Constant	0.41	0.17	8.690	1.121			
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Academic Adjustment				[1.360, 1.090]	0.631	2.95	.000	
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The result of hypothesis two revealed that academic adjustment significantly predicted mental health of government day secondary school students in Karu, Nasarawa state, Nigeria, $R=0.41$, $R^2=0.17$, $F(1, 121)= 8.690$, $P= .05$. This means that academic adjustment accounted for .17 of the variance in mental health among secondary school adolescents, indicating that the influence was significant. The regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.361$, $t = 2.95$, $p = .05$, 95%CI [1.360, 1.090]) was positive and significant; meaning academic adjustment reduces students' mental health of government day secondary school students in Karu, Nasarawa state, Nigeria. Hence, the second hypothesis is supported.

Discussion of the Findings

The result of hypothesis one revealed that parental divorce significantly predicted the mental health of government day secondary school students in Karu, Nasarawa State, Nigeria ($R = 0.47$, $R^2 = 0.22$, $F(1, 281) = 13.32$, $\beta = -0.471$, $t = -3.65$, $p < .05$, 95% CI [-1.690, -1.279]). This result indicates that parental divorce accounts for 22% of the

variation in students' mental health and has a significant negative influence on their psychological wellbeing. This finding is supported by the findings of Amato and Anthony (2014), who reported that children from divorced homes consistently exhibit higher levels of psychological distress, including anxiety and depression. It is also supported by Lansford (2022), who found that family disruption undermines emotional security and increases vulnerability to mental health challenges during adolescence. The implication is that parental separation reduces emotional stability and increases exposure to psychosocial stressors, thereby negatively affecting adolescents' mental health.

The result of hypothesis two showed that academic adjustment significantly predicted mental health among secondary school students ($R = 0.41$, $R^2 = 0.17$, $F(1, 121) = 8.69$, $\beta = 0.631$, $t = 2.95$, $p < .05$, 95% CI [1.090, 1.360]). This finding indicates that academic adjustment explains 17% of the variance in students' mental health and has a significant positive influence on their psychological wellbeing. This result is supported by the findings of Credé and Niehorster (2012), who established that students who are well-adjusted academically tend to experience better psychological adjustment and lower stress levels. It is also supported by Reddy et al. (2023), who reported that effective academic adaptation enhances students' resilience, self-efficacy, and emotional stability.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it is concluded that parental divorce and academic adjustment are significant determinants of mental health among secondary school students in Karu, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Parental divorce negatively affects students' mental health by increasing psychological distress, while academic adjustment enhances mental health by improving coping ability, resilience, and school engagement. The study further concludes that both family structure and school adjustment interact significantly in shaping adolescents' mental wellbeing.

Recommendations

- i. Schools should implement structured academic adjustment programs such as study skills training, mentoring, and stress management workshops.
- ii. Parents should Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:
- iii. remain actively involved in their children's education even after separation to reduce negative psychological impacts.

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