

Effect of Family Separation and Divorce on Students' Learning Motivation and Attitude: A Case Study of FUNAAB Undergraduates

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Abstract - Family separation and divorce have become increasingly prevalent in contemporary societies, posing significant psychosocial challenges for young people in tertiary institutions. These family disruptions often alter emotional stability, parental support structures and financial security, all of which are crucial for students' academic engagement. Despite growing concerns, empirical evidence on how family separation influences university students' learning motivation and attitudes in Nigeria remains limited. This study therefore examined the effect of family separation and divorce on learning motivation, learning attitude, attitudinal change, and coping mechanisms among undergraduate students at the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB). The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. A structured, self-administered questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from 291 undergraduates selected through stratified random sampling. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and inferential techniques, particularly regression analysis, to test four formulated hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. Descriptive findings showed that 33.0% of the respondents had experienced parental separation or divorce, with 37.7% reporting severe emotional distress and 60.9% indicating that their academic performance was negatively affected. Regression analysis revealed a statistically significant relationship between family separation and learning motivation ($R=0.212$, $R^2=0.045$, $F=13.55$, $p<.05$), indicating that family separation accounted for 4.5% of the variance in students' learning motivation. However, family separation did not significantly predict learning attitude ($R=0.111$, $R^2=0.012$, $F=3.60$, $p=.059$). A significant relationship was found between divorce status and attitudinal change among students ($R=0.286$, $R^2=0.082$, $F=25.87$, $p<.05$). Additionally, coping mechanisms significantly predicted students' ability to manage academic challenges ($R=0.164$, $R^2=0.027$, $F=7.96$, $p<.05$), although only 17.9% of respondents had accessed formal counselling services. The study recommends that universities strengthen counselling, mentorship, and peer-support programmes targeted at students from separated families. Proactive

outreach strategies should be implemented to reduce stigma and improve utilisation of counselling services, while parents should be encouraged to adopt supportive co-parenting practices that prioritise students' academic and emotional well-being.

Keywords: Family Separation, learning motivation, university students, FUNAAB, psycho-social well-being, student support services, Nigeria.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the most effective tools of personal and social growth since it provides people with the knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions needed in personal growth, economic productivity, and social life. Learning motivation and disposition are central to the achievement of educational development because their willingness to undertake academic activities, their perseverance in the challenges and the ability to long term educational goals are investigated. Although cognitive ability and institutional resources play an important role, researchers have continued to stress the importance of family structure and family stability in influencing the motivation of students, their attitudes, and their overall academic achievement.

The family is the most powerful agent of socialisation and forms the first environment where children and young adults learn to gain emotional support, discipline, values and attitudes towards learning (Ofodile et al., 2025). A secure family set up fosters self-confidence, feelings of emotional safety and an academic orientation that is constructive and that is irreplaceable in maintaining learning motivation. On the other hand, divorce and separation of the family often shatter this support network exposing the

students to emotional turmoil, lack of parental oversight, poor economic situation and undermined guidance. Such disruptions might have negative impacts on the attitudes of students to education, the ability to set goals and adherence to academic duties.

Separation and divorce in the family have become very common in the entire world. According to the international demographic reports, it is estimated that around 40-50 percent of the marriages in some of the developed nations end with divorce and millions of children and young adults undergo separation with their parents each year (Andrzejewski, 2024). The empirical studies in Europe, North America, and Asia (Alter et al., 2024; Mussa, 2025) continue to show that students in separated or divorced families have decreased academic motivation, school engagement, and unfavorable learning attitudes compared to students in healthy families. The longitudinal data also show that the parental divorce is linked to the reduced ambitions to receive the education and also the reduced rates of the tertiary education completion (Mabuza, 2025).

In Africa, and especially in Nigeria, the changing socio-economic status, urbanisation, economic pressure, and changing culture values are all factors that have led to the slow increase in instability in families. Despite the fact that divorce is still a culturally sensitive issue in most places in Nigeria, recent studies have shown a gradual rise in the rates of marital dissolution particularly in the urban and semi-urban areas (Sandra, 2025). The research carried in various areas of Nigeria shows that adolescents in broken families tend to deal with emotional pain, stigma, and lack of parental support, which can deter their motivation to learn and engage in the educational process (Ekeanya et al., 2023).

Family separation has a variety of forms such as legal divorce, long-term marital dispute, parental abandonment, an absentee parent, and loss of a parent through migration and separation. Though it may be in a different form, these disruptions often lead to economic stress: the students that formerly enjoyed the benefits of dual parental care might be left at the mercies of one parent or guardian. This situation may limit access to study resources, decent housing and good study conditions. In other instances, college students are forced to engage in part-time work to make ends meet and as a result, they lack time and energy to study (Summer et al., 2025).

In addition to the financial issues, the consequences of family separation are more psychological and emotional. The studies show that children in broken families have higher anxiety, loneliness, low self-esteem, and feelings of abandonment which are the psychological issues which tend to be the most pertinent to the lack of academic motivation and negative learning attitudes (Duco et al., 2025). It can lead to emotional distress, which undermines focus, reduces persistence in learning activities and makes students lack the sense of the importance of education. Without proper parental support and supervision, affected students can face difficulties in self-discipline, time management, and academic goal-setting which would lead to withdrawal in learning activities and poor performance.

At the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB), the students are of different socio-economic and family backgrounds, with the family situation influencing the separation and divorce cases. Although a few undergraduates reported resilience and flexibility to cope with family derailment, other students experience persistent emotional turmoil, financial disadvantage and diminished academic motivation. Such disasters could be in form of low attendance at classes, low involvement of academics, low motivation towards studying and poor learning attitude that would eventually threaten academic success and retention of students in the university system.

Although family separation is the modern reality in Nigeria, the possible effects it has on the learning motivation of university students and their attitudes is an understudied subject. The extant Nigerian research has been focusing mostly on students of primary or secondary schools or has consistently focused on psychological and behavioural performance without much focus on motivational and attitudinal aspects at tertiary level (Sanni, 2024). This gap is a hindrance to the ability of universities, counsellors, and policymakers to generate evidence-based interventions that can reasonably meet particularly academic requirements of undergraduates in separated families.

The consequences of this research gap are enormous. Without a proper grasp of the impact of family separation on the process of learning motivation and attitudes, the impacted students will continue to

record a lack of academic engagement, low performance levels, and high dropout rates. Additionally, the absence of specific institutional support systems can further increase existing disparities in the university system, frustrating the process of ensuring the inclusive and equitable provision of education.

It is against this background and within this context that the current research seeks to investigate how family separation and divorce impact the learning motivation and attitude of the undergraduates at FUNAAB. The investigation of the emotional, financial and social aspects of family disruption and the impact on academic behaviour will produce data-driven information that can be used in counselling services, student support programmes and educational policy. Finally, subtle interpretation of these forces is essential in providing a positive academic climate that promotes motivation, positive learning attitudes, and facilitation of students of every family background to achieve their educational goals.

II. HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses will be tested in this study:

1. There is no significant effects of Family separation or divorce on students' learning motivation.
2. There is no significant effects of Family separation or divorce on students' learning attitude.
3. There is no significant relationship between attitudinal change and students from divorced families.
4. There is no significant relationship between the coping mechanisms of students from separated families and the academic challenges they face.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design, which allows for the systematic collection of data on the impact of family separation or divorce on children's emotions, academics, and social development. This design is appropriate because it enables the researcher to analyse existing conditions, describe relationships, and make inferences based on collected data.

Population, Sample and Sampling Technique

To ensure a representative sample from the student population of the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB), this study will adopt Taro Yamane's formula to determine the sample size. According to recent statistics, FUNAAB has approximately 21,255 students and about 5% of these students are from single-parent households (FUNAAB Student Affairs, 2023). Therefore, the target population for this study is approximately:

$$N = 0.05 \times 21,255 = 1,062.75 \approx 1,063 \text{ students}$$

Taro Yamane's formula is given as:

$$n = \frac{N}{[1 + N(e)^2]}$$

Where:

- n = sample size
- N = population size (1,063)
- e = margin of error (typically 0.05 for a 95% confidence level)

Substituting the values into the formula:

$$n = \frac{1063}{1 + 1063(0.05)^2} = \frac{1063}{1 + 1063(0.0025)} = \frac{1063}{1 + 2.6575} = \frac{1063}{3.6575} \approx 290.68$$

Thus, the sample size is approximately 291 students. The study adopted a stratified random sampling technique. The population were first stratified based on college and level of study to ensure even representation. From each stratum, students were selected in proportion to the size of the stratum relative to the target population. This method ensured that the sample reflects the diversity within the population of students from single-parent households at FUNAAB.

Instrumentation

A self-administered questionnaire was designed to gather data on students' academic performance, emotional well-being and social behaviour. The questionnaire had both closed-ended and open-ended questions to allow for comprehensive responses.

IV. RESULT

A total number of two hundred and ninety-one questionnaires were distributed among the respondents and all the questionnaires were filled and returned.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

| Demographic Characteristics | | N = 291 | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------|----------|
| | | Frequency | Percent% |
| Age Group of Respondent | 18 – 20 | 54 | 18.5 |
| | 21 – 23 | 86 | 29.6 |
| | 24 – 26 | 112 | 38.5 |
| | 27 and above | 39 | 13.4 |
| Gender | Female | 152 | 52.2 |
| | Male | 139 | 47.8 |
| Level | 100 Level | 8 | 2.7 |
| | 200 Level | 20 | 6.9 |
| | 300 Level | 51 | 17.5 |
| | 400 Level | 135 | 46.4 |
| | 500 Level | 77 | 26.5 |
| College | COLANIM | 38 | 10.3 |
| | COLEND5 | 47 | 16.2 |
| | COLENG | 30 | 10.3 |
| | COLFHEC | 84 | 28.9 |
| | COLPLANT | 49 | 16.8 |
| | COLPHYS | 20 | 6.9 |
| | COLERM | 13 | 4.5 |
| Religion | Christianity | 242 | 83.2 |
| | Islam | 42 | 14.4 |
| | Traditional | 7 | 2.4 |
| Marital Status | Married | 168 | 57.7 |
| | Divorced | 42 | 14.4 |
| | Separated | 54 | 18.6 |
| | Widowed | 27 | 9.3 |
| Who do you currently live with? | Both Parents | 78 | 26.8 |
| | Mother Only | 164 | 56.4 |
| | Father only | 12 | 4.1 |
| | Guardian/Others | 37 | 12.7 |

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 above shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents and 54 (18.5%) were between 18-20 years, 86 (29.6%) were between 21-23 years, 112 (38.5%) were between 24-26 years while 39 (13.4%) were 27 and above. This means that the research study has most of its respondents between age 24-26 years. 152 (52.2%) were female, and 139 (47.8%) were male. 8 (2.7%) were in 100L, 20 (6.9%) were in 200L, 51 (17.5%) were in 300L, 135 (46.4%) were in 400L, and 77 (26.5%) were in 500L which means that the research study has most of its respondents in 400L. Concerning the colleges of the respondents, 38 (10.3%) were in COLANIM, 47 (16.2%) were in COLEND5, 30 (10.3%) were in COLENG, 84 (28.9%) were in COLFHEC, 49 (16.8%) were in COLPLANT, 20 (6.9%) were in COLPHYS, 13

(4.5%) were in COLERM, and 10 (3.4%) were in COLVET. This means that the research study has most of its respondents from COLFHEC. On religion, 242 (83.2%) were Christians, 42 (14.4%) were Muslims, and 7 (2.4%) were Traditionalists. This means that the research study has most of its respondents as Christians. 168 (57.7%) of the respondents' parents were married, 42 (14.4%) were divorced, 54 (18.6%) were separated, and 27 (9.3%) were widowed. This means that most of the respondents in the research study have married parents. 78 (26.8%) of the respondents were living with both parents, 12 (4.1%) were living with their father only, 37 (12.7%) were living with their guardian/others, and 164 (56.4%) were living with their mother only and this implies that the research

study has most of its respondents living with their mother.

| Items | Response | N = 291 | |
|--|----------------------|-----------|----------|
| | | Frequency | Percent% |
| Have your parent ever separated? | Yes | 96 | 33.0 |
| | No | 195 | 67.0 |
| If yes, at what age did your parent's separation or divorce occur? | Below 5 years | 16 | 16.7 |
| | 5-10 years | 16 | 16.7 |
| | 11-15 years | 13 | 13.5 |
| | 16 years and above | 17 | 17.7 |
| | Blank | 34 | 35.4 |
| How did the separation or divorce affect you emotionally? | Severely | 60 | 37.7 |
| | Moderately | 46 | 24.4 |
| | Slightly | 17 | 19.9 |
| | Not at all | 41 | 18.2 |
| Did the separation or divorce affect your academic performance? | Yes | 100 | 60.9 |
| | No | 64 | 39.0 |
| Who primarily supports your education financially? | Both parents | 78 | 26.8 |
| | Mother | 110 | 37.8 |
| | Father | 54 | 18.5 |
| | Guardian | 29 | 9.7 |
| | Others | 23 | 7.9 |
| Since your parents separated or divorced, how motivated are you to study? | Very Motivated | 71 | 24.4 |
| | Somewhat Motivated | 104 | 35.7 |
| | Not Motivated | 116 | 39.9 |
| How often do you participate in class activities or discussions? | Always | 116 | 39.9 |
| | Sometimes | 152 | 52.2 |
| | Rarely | 15 | 5.2 |
| | Never | 8 | 5.2 |
| Do you set academic goals for yourself? | Yes | 216 | 74.2 |
| | No | 75 | 25.8 |
| Do you feel supported by either or both of your parents in your academics? | Yes | 40 | 13.7 |
| | No | 35 | 12.0 |
| | Sometimes | 216 | 74.2 |
| Has your attitude towards schooling changed since the separation or divorce? | Yes | 85 | 51.8 |
| | No | 79 | 48.2 |
| Do you find it difficult to trust others or form close friendships in school? | Yes | 150 | 51.5 |
| | No | 141 | 48.5 |
| Have you ever felt isolated or withdrawn from school activities due to your family situation? | Yes | 159 | 54.6 |
| | No | 132 | 45.4 |
| Has your behaviour (e.g., punctuality, discipline, social interaction) in school changed as a result of family issues? | Yes | 230 | 79.0 |
| | No | 61 | 21.0 |
| Do you receive emotional or psychological support from anyone? | Yes | 96 | 33.0 |
| | No | 195 | 67.0 |
| Have you ever spoken to a school counsellor or mentor about your family situation? | Yes | 52 | 17.9 |
| | No | 239 | 82.1 |
| What coping strategies have you found helpful in dealing with family separation/divorce? | Talking to friends | 102 | 35.0 |
| | Counselling | 47 | 16.2 |
| | Religious Activities | 94 | 32.3 |

| | | | |
|---|---------------------|-----|------|
| | Focusing on studies | 48 | 16.5 |
| Do you believe support services such as counselling and mentorship can help students in similar situations? | Yes | 263 | 90.4 |
| | No | 28 | 9.6 |

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 2 classifies the opinion of respondents to know if their parent has ever been separated. It reveals that 96 (33.0%) affirm it, and 195 (67.0%) deny it. This means the majority of the respondents' parents have not been separated or divorced. To know the respondent age when their parents separated or divorced. It reveals that 16 (16.7%) were below 5 years, 16 (16.7%) were between 5 and 10 years, 13 (13.5%) were between 11 and 15 years, 17 (17.7%) were 16 years and above, and 34 (35.5%) left it blank. This means the majority of the respondents were not affected. To know whether the respondents were affected by the separation or divorce emotionally, the data revealed that 60 (37.7%) were affected severely, 46 (24.4%) were affected moderately, 17 (19.9%) were slightly affected, and 41 (18.2%) were slightly affected. This means that most of the research study's respondents are severely affected. Asking if the separation or divorce affects the respondents' academic performance, the table revealed that 100 (60.9%) affirm it, and 64 (39.0%) deny it. This means the majority of the respondents' academic performance was affected as a result of the separation or divorce. 78 (26.8%) education was financially supported by both parents, 110 (37.8%) were supported by their mother, 54 (18.5%) were supported by a guardian, while 23 (7.9%) were supported by others. This means the majority of the respondents' mothers supported their education financially. Since their parents separated or divorced, 71 (24.4%) were very motivated to study, 104 (35.7%) were somewhat motivated, while 116 (39.9%) were not motivated. This means the majority of the respondents were not motivated to study since their parents separated or divorced. On the opinion of respondents on how often they participate in class activities or discussions, 116 (39.9%) always participate, 152 (52.2%) sometimes participate, 15 (5.2%) rarely participate, while 8 (5.2%) never participate. This means the majority of the respondents sometimes participate in class activities or discussions. 216 (74.2%) affirm that they set academic goals for themselves while 75 (25.8%) deny it which means the majority of the respondents affirm the statement. 40 (13.7%) affirmed they feel supported by either of their parents in their

academics, 35 (12.0%) denied it and 216 (74.2%) does so sometimes. This means the majority of the respondents feel supported by either or both parents in their academics sometimes. To know if the attitude of the respondents changed towards schooling since the separation or divorce. It reveals that 85 (51.8%) affirm it while 79 (48.2%) deny it. 150 (51.5%) find it difficult to trust others or form close friendships in school while 141 (48.5%) deny it. This means the majority of the respondents affirm the statement. 159 (54.6%) have ever felt isolated or withdrawn from school activities due to their family situation while 132 (45.4%) have not. This means the majority of the respondents affirm the statement. 61 (21.0%) disagreed that their behaviour, such as punctuality, discipline, and social interaction in school, changed as a result of family issues while 230 (79.0%) agreed. This means the majority of the respondents agreed to the statement.

On the opinion of respondents as to whether they receive emotional or psychological support from anyone, 96 (33.0%) disagreed while 195 (67.0%) agreed. This means majority of the respondent agreed to the statement. 52 (17.9%) at some times have spoken to a school counsellor or mentor about their family situation, while 239 (82.1%) have never spoken to a school counsellor. Regarding the coping strategies that have been found helpful in dealing with family separation/divorce. 47 (16.2%) of the respondents used counselling, 48 (16.5%) agreed with focusing on studies, 94 (32.3%) agreed with religious activities, and 102 (35.0%) agreed with talking with friends. This means the majority of the respondents agreed to the strategy of talking to friends. Lastly, 263 (90.4%) agreed that support services such as counselling and mentorship can help students in similar situations while 28 (9.6%) disagreed.

V. HYPOTHESES TESTING

Inferential statistics (regression analysis) were used to test the research hypotheses and analyse the dependent and independent variables.

Hypotheses 1: There is no significant effects of Family separation or divorce on students' learning motivation.

Table 3 Model Summary

| Model | R | R ² | Adj R ² | Std Error | Change Statistics | | | | |
|-------|-------------------|----------------|--------------------|-----------|-----------------------|--------|-----|-----|------|
| | | | | | R ² Change | F | df1 | df2 | Sig. |
| 1 | .212 ^a | .045 | .041 | .373 | .045 | 13.547 | 1 | 289 | .000 |

Table 4 ANOVA

| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|-------------------|
| Regression | 1.882 | 1 | 1.882 | 13.547 | .000 ^b |
| Residual | 40.146 | 289 | .139 | | |
| Total | 42.027 | 290 | | | |

Table 1

Table 5 Coefficients

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. | 95.0% Confidence Interval for B |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|------|--------|---------------------------------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | 1.132 | .102 | | 11.081 | .000 |
| Family Separation | .177 | .048 | .212 | 3.681 | .000 |

R² = 0.045, indicating that 4.5% of the variation in learning motivation is explained by family separation. The p-value = 0.000, which is less than 0.05, indicating statistical significance. There is a statistically significant effect of family separation or divorce on students' learning motivation; R² = 0.045, p < 0.05, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. The regression coefficient (B = 0.177) is positive, suggesting that students who have experienced family separation may report slightly higher

motivation scores. This finding contradicts expectations and the descriptive data showing reduced motivation among affected students. The inconsistency may be due to how variables were coded or interpreted and warrants further investigation. Family separation or divorce significantly affects students' learning motivation. Hypothesis 2: There is no significant effects of Family separation or divorce on students' learning attitude.

Table 6 Model Summary

| Model | R | R ² | Adj R ² | Std. Error | Change Statistics | | | | |
|-------|-------------------|----------------|--------------------|------------|-----------------------|-------|-----|-----|------|
| | | | | | R ² Change | F | df1 | df2 | Sig. |
| 1 | .111 ^a | .012 | .009 | .298 | .012 | 3.596 | 1 | 289 | .059 |

Table 2

Table 7 ANOVA

| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|-------------------|
| Regression | .320 | 1 | .320 | 3.596 | 0.59 ^b |
| Residual | 25.725 | 289 | .089 | | |
| Total | 26.046 | 290 | | | |

Table 3

Table 8 Coefficients

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. | 95.0% Confidence Interval for B |
|------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|---|--------|---------------------------------|
| | B | | | | |
| (Constant) | 1.779 | .082 | | 21.756 | .000 |

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------|------|-------|--------|------|
| Family Separation | -.073 | .038 | -.111 | -1.896 | .059 |
|-------------------|-------|------|-------|--------|------|

$R^2 = 0.012$ (1.2%), $F = 3.596$, $p\text{-value} = 0.059$.

The statistical test showed that family separation or divorce does not have a significant effect on students' learning attitude at the 5% level ($R^2 = 0.012$, $p \geq 0.05$), the hypothesis is therefore accepted. However, descriptive results indicate that 51.8% of students reported an attitudinal shift, suggesting that while the trend is visible in student responses, it was not strong enough to reach statistical significance in the model.

Further qualitative research may be needed to explore this more deeply. Family separation or divorce does not significantly affect students' learning attitude.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between attitudinal change and students from divorced families.

Table 9 Model Summary

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | R Square Change | F Change | df1 | df2 | Sig. F Change |
|-------|------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|----------|-----|-----|---------------|
| 1 | .286 | .082 | .079 | .334 | .082 | 25.871 | 1 | 289 | .000 |

Table 10 ANOVA

| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|------|
| Regression | 2.887 | 1 | 2.887 | 25.871 | .000 |
| Residual | 32.254 | 289 | .112 | | |
| Total | 35.141 | 290 | | | |

Table 11 Coefficients

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. | 95.0% Confidence Interval for B |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|------|--------|---------------------------------|
| (Constant) | 1.488 | .097 | | 15.340 | .000 |
| Divorced Family | .241 | .047 | .286 | 5.086 | .000 |

$R^2 = 0.082$ (8.2%), $F = 25.871$, $p\text{-value} = 0.000$.

There is a statistically significant relationship between family divorce and students' attitudinal change; $R^2 = 0.082$, $p < 0.05$, thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. This finding suggests that students from divorced families are more likely to experience a shift in their academic attitudes and behaviours.

Attitudinal change is significantly related to being from a divorced family.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant relationship between the coping mechanisms of students from separated families and the academic challenges they face.

Table 12 Model Summary

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | R Square Change | F Change | df1 | df2 | Sig. F Change |
|-------|------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|----------|-----|-----|---------------|
| 1 | .164 | .027 | .023 | .345 | .027 | 7.962 | 1 | 289 | .005 |

Table 13 ANOVA

| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|------|
| Regression | 1.885 | 1 | 1.885 | 7.962 | .005 |
| Residual | 68.444 | 289 | .237 | | |
| Total | 70.329 | 290 | | | |

Table 14 Coefficients

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. | 95.0% Confidence Interval for B |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|------|--------|---------------------------------|
| (Constant) | 1.523 | .086 | | 17.709 | .000 |
| Coping Strategy | .192 | .068 | .164 | 2.821 | .005 |

$R^2 = 0.027$ (2.7%), $F = 7.962$, $p\text{-value} = 0.005$.

The analysis shows a statistically significant relationship between coping mechanisms and students' ability to manage academic challenges; $R^2 = 0.027$, $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. While the effect size is small, the result confirms that coping strategies such as talking to friends, engaging in religious activities, or seeking counselling contribute to how students navigate academic stress linked to family separation. Coping strategies significantly influence students' ability to manage academic challenges resulting from family separation.

VI. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first hypothesis stated that there is no significant effect of family separation or divorce on the learning motivation of students. The regression analysis, however, showed that the familial event has a statistically significant relationship ($R^2 = 0.045$, $F = 13.547$, $p = 0.05$), which means that the familial event explains an approximation of 4.5% of the variance in learning motivation. The effect size is not that large but the result implies that the null hypothesis should be rejected. The positive value of the regression coefficient (0.177) is another indication that students with separated or divorced families have a little more motivation score than their colleagues. This opposite result is contrary to the common knowledge and the majority of descriptive data which generally suggests that family disruption correlates with low academic motivation. The most likely intervention is that certain students develop adaptive resilience, a higher level of independence, or an increased motivation to achieve academic success as a coping mechanism to the family turmoil. According to the previous research, although family disruption is typically linked to negative academic performance, some students react to it by becoming more self-driven and goal-oriented (Ferguson and McHenry-Sorber, 2025). The current finding contradicts a number of Nigerian and cross-country studies which indicated lower levels of motivation in students who had been brought up in broken families; indeed, Apata et al., (2023) observed that parental separation significantly decreased the academic motivation by causing emotional distress and diminished parental supportive strategies, whereas Chinedu and Longjohn (2024) established impoverished academic involvement among the students in instable families. The difference could be due to differences in measurement strategies, coding

of variables, sample peculiarities or moderating influence of coping strategies and social support. However, the results highlight the fact that family separation has a tangible impact on learning motivation and it should be reflected in the educational planning.

The second hypothesis was that the attitude of students to learning is not significantly influenced by the separation or divorce in the family. The outcome of the regression refuted this claim as it did not show any statistically significant effect at the 0.05 level ($R^2 = 0.012$, $F = 3.596$, $p = 0.059$). As a result, the null hypothesis was accepted. Although family separation accounts to approximately 1.2 percent of weakening in the stance of learning, the effect measure is too minimal to be considered to be statistically significant. These results imply that institutional, peer, and personal variables have a stronger influence on the attitudes of students toward learning compared to the level of family structure at university level. Being young adults, undergraduates might have psychological maturity and autonomy that shields the immediate effect of family disturbance on personal academic attitudes. This is in line with claims by Retanal and Maloney (2026) that effects of parental separation on educational attitudes are dampened with age as one grows to the adult years. Descriptive statistics however show that 51.8% of the respondents had experienced changes in attitude that were noticeable, which suggests that family separation may have indirect or subtle effects that had not been adequately explained using the quantitative regression analysis. This comes in line with Rizwan et al., (2024), who established that family instability can also influence the attitudes of students because of the emotional mechanisms overriding the actual academic behaviours. Based on this, the statistical test failed to significantly confirm an important effect, and therefore, the identified trend is to point to the necessity of conducting research, either qualitative or mixed, to investigate the underlying attitudinal processes more deeply.

Hypothesis three stated that attitudinal change and students in divorced family do not have a significant relationship. It was found that the family divorce was significantly associated with the attitudinal change of students ($R^2 = 0.082$, $F = 25.871$, $p < 0.05$). This finding caused the null hypothesis to be rejected. The coefficient of regression ($\beta = 0.241$) shows that the students whose families are divorced are more

susceptible to changes in their academic attitudes and behaviours. Therefore, the case of divorce, as the particular expression of the separation in a family, seems to have a more robust connection to the change in attitude than the overall instability of a family. Divorce is in most cases followed by a long period of heightened parental feud, emotional tension and social stigma, which can transform the education, authority and future goals of the students. This result supports the opinion of the previous studies where Worley et al., (2024) stated that there are changes in academic orientation, commitment, and behavioural patterns of children and young adults in divorced families. Equivalent outcomes have been reported in the Nigerian research, which reported that family disruption due to divorce is additionally linked to poor academic attitudes, lack of discipline, and inactivity about learning tasks (Apata et al, 2023). The existing evidence supports the opinion that, although the overall separation of the family does not make a significant impact on the attitude to learning, divorce in particular makes a stronger psychological and behavioural influence on the academic orientation of students.

The fourth hypothesis stated that a student with divorced parents does not have any significant relationship with the coping mechanisms used and the academic challenges. Instead, the findings showed that strategies on coping strategies were statistically significant between academic challenges and the students belonging to separated families ($R^2=0.027$, $F =7.962$, $p=0.05$ and hence null hypothesis was rejected). Though the explanatory value is small (2.7%), the result proves the role of adaptive coping mechanisms in the ways students cope with academic challenges related to family separation. Students who embrace beneficial coping strategies, including getting emotional support by friends, taking part in religious practices or accessing counselling services are in a better position to overcome their academic stresses and threats. This is in line with the stress and coping theory which argues that adaptive coping has the ability to reduce the adverse impact of stressful life events on functioning (Simione and Gnagnarella, 2023). The latter is evidenced by empirical findings; Tindle et al., (2022) found out that students who possess strong coping resources and social support mechanisms adjust to academic stressors better despite the disruption of the family. Menyaga and Inongha (2024) found that counselling and peer support helped Nigerian

students to persist in their studies and become more resilient after they experienced family instability. In this way, the current results demonstrate the significance of the institutional support systems including counselling units and peer mentoring programmes in helping students whose family is separated.

In general, the findings reflect that family separation and divorce has a considerable impact on learning motivation, attitudinal transformation, and academic coping mechanisms of students though the effects vary in magnitude and direction depending on outcome measures. Attitudinal change seems to be less influenced, but the experiences, which are related to divorces, and coping styles are also significant factors that affect academic pathways of students. These results support the need to develop psychosocial interventions specific to institutions of higher learning, especially counseling services aimed at helping students in divorced families or separated households.

VII. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that family separation and divorce have a significant and largely negative effect on the learning motivation of undergraduate students at FUNAAB. The emotional turmoil, feelings of isolation, and changes in behaviour stemming from family disruption create considerable barriers to academic engagement. While the direct statistical link to learning *attitude* was not established as significant in the inferential analysis, the descriptive data strongly indicates that students perceive a negative shift in their academic performance and general attitude towards schooling post-separation or divorce.

Students from separated families are navigating their academic journey with diminished motivation, a lack of goal-setting, and inadequate parental support. There is a critical disconnect between the prevalence of these struggles and the use of formal institutional support systems. Students overwhelmingly turn to peers and religion for support rather than university counsellors, despite acknowledging the potential benefits of such services. Therefore, family separation or divorce is a significant, often unaddressed, challenge that hinders students' ability to thrive academically and socially within the university environment.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. The management of the university should develop and actively promote targeted support programs, including counselling, mentorship and academic support, specifically for students from separated families, implement training for lecturers and academic advisors to help them recognize the signs of emotional distress and academic struggles in students and equip them with the knowledge to refer students to appropriate counselling services.
2. The University management should also create policies and programs that foster a more inclusive and emotionally supportive campus environment where students feel safe to discuss their challenges without fear of stigma. This could include establishing peer support groups.
3. The University Counsellors should develop proactive outreach programs to destigmatize counselling and connect with students who may be struggling, rather than waiting for them to seek help.
4. Parents should be encouraged to understand the profound impact of their separation or divorce on their children's academic lives and to adopt effective co-parenting strategies that prioritize the child's emotional and academic well-being.
5. Students should be encouraged to utilize the formal support systems available at the university, in addition to their informal networks, to develop more effective coping strategies.

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