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IMPACT OF BROKEN HOMES ON THE SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING OF JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL CHRISTIAN STUDENTS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the Impact of Broken Homes on the Spiritual Well-Being of Junior Secondary School Christian Students in Nigeria. The focus is on how family structure and related disruptions affect students' academics, religious beliefs, and participation in Christian practices, church involvement, personal spirituality, and moral outlook at an early adolescent stage. The paper did an extensive study on the following: Broken Home, various Dimensions of Broken Homes, spiritual Well-Being of Christian Students, impact of Broken Homes on the spiritual well-being of Christian junior secondary school students, and possible solution to overcome broken home spiritual well-being of Christian students in junior secondary schools. From the discussion, the paper made the following suggestions based on the importance of Sunday school in Nigerian churches: Parents and guardians should make deliberate efforts to provide consistent spiritual guidance, emotional support, and moral instruction to children, even in situations of family separation; Churches and religious organizations should intensify counseling programmes and mentorship activities targeted at students from broken homes to help strengthen their spiritual and emotional well-being; School authorities and teachers should provide guidance and counseling services within schools to support students facing family-related challenges; Government and educational stakeholders should organize family-life education programmes aimed at promoting effective communication, conflict resolution, and family stability; Students should be encouraged to actively participate in positive peer groups, school fellowship activities, and church programmes that promote spiritual growth and moral values.

Key words: Broken Homes, Spiritual Well-Being and Christian Students.

1.1 Introduction

Family is the fundamental social institution responsible for socialization, moral formation, and the early religious instruction of children. A "broken home" commonly referring to families disrupted by separation, divorce, death of a parent, prolonged single-parenting due to abandonment, or other forms of persistent family instability can undermine the processes through which children acquire values, religious habits, and spiritual orientation. In Nigeria, and particularly within the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja, the phenomenon of family disruption has attracted academic and public attention because of its perceived influence on the psychosocial and moral development of adolescents.

The family lays the psychological, educational, moral and spiritual foundation in the overall development of the child. The family has enormous amount of influence on the children both directly or indirectly in the formative years of the child. It transmits culture and knowledge to the child, correcting the child where he or she goes wrong and directing him or her in various aspects of life in the society. The child's family offers the best upbringing as they serve as teachers. Parents lay the foundation for the desire social and economic well-being of the child. The training a child received from the family is of great importance in his or her personality formation. It is expected that love should bring two persons together and it is the same love that should be transferred to the children. Most of the children who come from broken families instinctively lost the sense of morality, hence a crisis of identity. The children consistently lose their emotional stability, because of the inflicted raging wounds in the minds of the families through separation. Guilt and persistent fear began to dominate with concomitant moral defection. The increasing rate

of broken families in Nigeria is an intricate incident happening among many families and in the world at large.

A broken home is regarded as one of the serious social problems that causes psychological problems in individuals. This is because it makes permanent and indelible impact on the victims. In fact, the traits of a broken home remain with the individual forever no matter how much happy they become later in life. It is not only the individual that suffers from this problem, the society shares this negative effect too because this individual that could have contributed meaningfully to its socio-economic development has been affected negatively.

The issue of a broken home has drawn the attention of several individuals, researchers, organizations and denominations most especially in the Amac, Fct Abuja. Hence the need for measures to arrest the ugly trend. This thesis, therefore, is aimed at contributing its quota by trying to identify how broken homes affect the academic achievement of Christian students in secondary schools and to explore the ways to help students from broken homes perform better academically.

It is based on the foregoing that the paper examines the impact of broken homes on the spiritual well-being of junior secondary school Christian students in Nigeria. The focus is on how family structure and related disruptions affect students' religious beliefs, participation in Christian practices, church involvement, personal spirituality, and moral outlook at an early adolescent stage.

1.2 Conceptual Clarification

1.2.1 Broken Home

Broken home refers to the division or separation of parents who have been together for a long period of time and have suddenly divorced or terminated their relationship, or to the reunification of the once agreed marriage knot after exchanging material vows and having lived

together for a long period of time. Marriage is an institution that plays a critical part in the upbringing and development of human beings. It is the union of two adult individuals who have made the decision to spend the rest of their lives together. As a result, they are sharing shared care and duty for their children, who are the products of their marriage (Frazer, 2024).

The concept of broken home is defined by Hurlock (2025), as a home where one of the parents is dead, separated, divorce or a vocation that necessitate long absence of one or both parents. Broken homes are defined as one in which one of the partners loses his/her spouse by death separation, divorce, desertion or single parenting (Conkline, 2024). Deborah (2022) See broken homes as a situation where two spouses separate leaving the children to the hazard of the society. Momoh (2020) Sees broken home as a home torn apart by separation of parents.

Aremu (2026), described broken home as the integral part of the setting that is father and mother, the integral part is not available either by dead, separation or divorce. Broken home occur when husband and wife separate from each other through either natural causes (death) or by human cause (divorce), leaving the care responsibility of the children to one parent. Broken home could be temporal or permanent. It is temporal when there is still hope of coming together after the relevant laws must have been put in place.

According to Oxford Advanced Learner`s Dictionary (2010) defined Broken Home as a family in which parents are divorced or separated. This is to ensure that issues 10 that created the temporal separation are settled. But if the broken home is permanent, it means there is no hope of coming together. Broken home has to do with either one of the partners quitting or saying “bye bye” to his/her spouse as a result of infidelity, pride, superstition, religion, disagreement, in-laws interferences, alcoholism, and disrespect for one another or bulling (violence). Death is natural

cause of why homes tear apart. It is unpredicted phenomenon that has gone beyond any body`s control. It can occur as a result of war, illness, accident, and through natural disaster such as flooding, earthquake, and plane crash or bomb blast.

According to Hurlock (2025), “The home is the place the child comes back to with his experiences. It is the place where he retreats to lick his wounds, the stage to which he returns to parade the glory of his performance the refuge he finds in which to brood over his ill-treatment, real or fancied. The home in other words is the place to which one brings the everyday run of social experience to sift, to evaluate, to appraise, to understand or to be twisted, to faster, to be magnified or ignored as the case may be”. There is always cordial existence in the home when both husband and wife play their parental roles satisfactory but turns emotional when one parent neglects his or her parental role. When both husband and wife are disenchanted with the parents‟ role, the financial relationship would be intensified resulting in a further deterioration in family relationship. A study conducted by Craig, et al. (2023) indicates that divorce is a product of broken homes, therefore children in single parents families are more likely to drop out of school than in two parents‟ families.

A broken home is a problem that deserves serious attention and consideration in our modern society today. A broken home is not new globally because it has been in existence for many years. It is a big societal problem that disturbs individuals, families, students and the society as a whole. The term “broken home” does not mean the falling walls of a house. It means not being together of two partners due to some factors like conflict or lack of understanding among couples. A broken home can simply be described as a home where parents are either divorced or separated by any other cause. A child from this home could be unfortunate to suffer neglect or child abuse from his father or mother depending on whom he is living with. His responsibilities could be shifted to an

uncle, brother, grand-parents or any other relation that the parent feels could take up the training of the child.

The conceptual model for this study links family structure (intact vs. broken) and family processes (parental involvement in religious practices, frequency of family devotions, parental church attendance) to student spiritual well-being (measured by religious belief, personal devotion, church participation, moral values, and sense of meaning). Socio-demographic variables (age, gender, parental education, school type) are included as moderating or control variables.

A schematic diagram (to be presented in the thesis) will illustrate these relationships, with arrows from family structure and family processes pointing to spiritual well-being and sociodemographic factors as potential moderators.

1..2.2 Various Dimensions of Broken Homes

a. **Broken homes or marital dissolution:** Is a social problem relating to the institution of marriage or the family. Structurally, a family is either broken or intact. A broken family in this context is one that is not structurally intact for various reasons of the death of a parent, divorce, separation, desertion and illegitimacy in which case the family was never completed. (Conkline 2024). The following dimensions of broken homes are as explained by Mosi (2025).

b. **Marital dissolution:** Is an omnibus concept which encapsulates circumstances in which a marriage is terminated or dissolved. Divorce can also be described as a legal termination or dissolution of a legal or customary marriage by a court or an appropriate agency. Separation as it relates to marital dissolution has two connotations. First, it refers to a circumstance where a legally married couple by their own choice chooses to live apart from

one another. Though they are legally married, the court outlines the conditions under which the concerned partners would leave. Secondly separation could result in a situation where one party, particularly the woman not wanting to put up with the ills of the marriage decides to separate from her partner. Although there are some cases of male separation from their spouse without any reason too. Dissertation refers to a situation where one of the partners abandons the other spouse. Annulment is the legal termination of a marital relationship which may not have been legal or the voiding of a legal marriage on account of its violation of marital laws.

1.2.3 Causes of Broken Home on spiritual well-being of Christian junior secondary school students

In the past, broken home in an average Nigerian society was minimal and the consequential effects of the products of such marriage have been negligible because of the setting of the traditional African society. However, with increased urbanization and westernization of our culture coupled with the idea of women's liberation, broken homes in the average Nigerian society becomes comparable to what obtains in the western world.

There are several reasons to broken homes, Sondashi (2026) asserted that the followings are most general reasons for broken home in African and Nigeria particular, these are:

(i) **Selfishness:** Uninhibited pursuit of selfish gratification is a serious cause of broken. People who are impatient and seek quick results and instant gratification give little or no thought to the consequence of broken home.

(ii) **Adultery:** Marital unfaithfulness is a universal cause of broken home. It brings with it the possibility of being exposed to a number of sexually transmitted diseases, it also create lack of trust among spouse.

(iii) **Wife or husband battering:** Physical and verbal abuse are two types of pain that can be inflicted on one spouse by the other. Men are often known with the manner of beating their wives, although there are some women who also beat their husband. Such action may terminate marriage.

(iv) **Wrong choice of partners:** Most people gets married to the wrong person simply because they are carried away by their physical looks, material wealth and not minding their character. This is why many marriages turn out to be unhappy.

(v) **Barrenness:** Another most shattering problem in marriage is failure to have children. According to Wieland (2020), the supreme purpose of marriage according to Africa people is to bear children, to build a family, to extend life and hand down the living torch of human existence.

(vi) **Parental interference:** Some parents involve themselves with their children's marriage. They sometimes make demands which are excessive and certainly very difficult to meet. Some are domineering and would like to rule their children's marriage.

(vii) **Economic** standing in a family plays an important role in Nigerian marriages. In the traditional Nigerian society, the man used his wife or wives as the case may be, with his children to improve his economy, especially, in the area of farming. But today, the reverse is the case. Nowadays a man uses his economic might to maintain his wife, children and his home in general. When the man is unable to meet the needs of his family, one of the resultant effects is a broken home. Increasing emphasis on materialism in this era further worsens this situation. Luigi-Boy (2025) noticed that most husbands of today want the financial assistance their wives can give, yet they

frown at the idea of their wives going to work at the expense of taking care of the home and the children. This sometimes brings problems and conflict between husband and wife and if not properly handled eventually leads to a broken home. However, no responsible man is expected to frown at his wife going to work.

(viii) **Social and economic pressure:** Female employment are opposed by many men, they will not allow their wife take any employment, when the wife insist marriage collapse. Broken home occurs for so many different cause and reasons in Africa and particularly Nigeria, the following are known to be the causes of broken homes, alcohol addition, abandonment, physical abuse, emotion abuse, irreconcilable differences, financial problems, interferences from parents or in-laws, lack of maturity, sexual incompatibility, religions conversion, cultural and life style differences, criminal behaviors and incarceration for crime among others (Frank, 2026).

(ix) **Health:** sometimes leads to broken homes in the Nigeria society today. This is a situation where the partner becomes insensitive to what the society thinks of him or her but decides to abandon his/her spouse due to ill health. Unfortunately, the society in which we live today is hostile to an invalid or a handicapped person. The result of this is that when a marriage partner becomes an invalid either through sickness or accident, the other partner abandons him/her.

1.2.4 Spiritual Well-Being of Christian Students

Spiritual well-being refers to the quality of an individual's relationship with God, self, others, and the environment, and it is a vital aspect of holistic development among Christian students. For Christian students, spiritual well-being is expressed through faith in God, regular participation in religious activities such as prayer, Bible study, church attendance, and adherence

to Christian moral values. It provides a sense of purpose, inner peace, hope, and moral direction, which are essential during adolescence a period marked by emotional, social, and psychological changes. Strong spiritual well-being helps students develop positive attitudes toward life, selfdiscipline, and respect for authority, which can influence their overall behaviour and adjustment in school.

In the school context, spiritual well-being contributes significantly to students' character formation and moral development. Christian students with a high level of spiritual well-being are more likely to demonstrate virtues such as honesty, compassion, forgiveness, and self-control. These values guide their interactions with peers and teachers and help them resist negative influences such as truancy, violence, and substance abuse. Furthermore, spiritual well-being serves as a coping mechanism, enabling students to handle stress, academic pressure, and personal challenges through faith and reliance on God.

However, the spiritual well-being of Christian students is strongly influenced by their family background and home environment. Parents play a major role in nurturing faith through religious instruction, role modelling, and encouragement of spiritual practices. When this support system is weakened, students may experience challenges in sustaining their spiritual growth. Therefore, spiritual well-being remains a crucial dimension of students' development, as it shapes their values, behaviour, and overall outlook on life, both within and outside the school environment.

1.2.5 Impact of Broken Homes on the spiritual well-being of Christian junior secondary school students

Poor Education Performance: This is another side impact of Broken Homes in our society today. There is no doubt that the education of a child will suffer and experience retardation

in a Broken Homes family structure; this is because parent plays a very vital role in the academic development of the children. When living in a divorced single-parent household, children tend to disengage from school at an early age (Astone & McLanahan, 2021). A child's academic performance improves when both parents are actively involved in the education of such a child (Fadeye, 2023, Nyarko, 2025, Vorgelet, 2026). The overall effect of family structure on a child's academic performance cannot be underestimated. The success of a child in the school depends on both parents playing their various parts in the upbringing of such child, two good heads are better than one. Fadeiye (2023) found that in two parents' homes, both parents have roles to play in child education. The father is to give the necessary tools for educational advancement, while the mother is to supplement the father's efforts in return.

Emotional and Psychological Instability among Children: Broken homes often expose children to emotional stress, anxiety, and feelings of insecurity due to the absence of one or both parents. According to Amato (2020), children from disrupted families are more likely to experience emotional distress and low self-esteem compared to those from intact homes. This emotional instability can affect family cohesion and may later manifest in society as maladjustment, aggression, or withdrawal from social interactions.

Weak Parental Supervision and Moral Guidance: Parental separation often reduces effective supervision and consistent moral training within the family. Hetherington and Kelly (2024) argue that broken homes frequently limit parents' ability to jointly monitor and guide children's behaviour, leading to gaps in discipline and value transmission. This breakdown in family control can contribute to increased deviant behaviour, which negatively impacts societal order.

Increase in Social Problems and Deviant Behaviour: Research indicates that children from broken homes are more vulnerable to engaging in delinquent and antisocial behaviours.

McLanahan and Sandefur (2025) report that adolescents from single-parent or disrupted families have higher risks of truancy, substance abuse, and juvenile delinquency. These behaviours, when widespread, pose challenges to societal stability and increase the burden on social institutions.

Economic Strain on Families and Society: Broken homes often result in reduced household income and increased financial pressure on the remaining parent. Amato and Keith (2021) note that economic hardship following family disruption affects children's access to quality education and healthcare. At the societal level, this can increase dependence on social welfare systems and limit overall economic productivity.

Weakening of Social and Family Values: The family is a primary agent of socialization and value transmission. When families are disrupted, the process of instilling shared values, norms, and responsibilities may be weakened. According to Coleman (2025), family instability reduces social capital, which is essential for maintaining strong family ties and cohesive communities. Over time, this erosion of values can negatively affect social cohesion and moral standards within society.

1.2.6 Possible solution to overcome broken home spiritual well-being of Christian students in junior secondary schools

According to Nabaitu and Bachengan (as cited by Abbas, 2024), the consequences of broken homes especially on the academic performance of a pupil cannot be overemphasized. The

following are therefore the ways of reducing the occurrence of broken homes in Nigeria and elsewhere, these are;

A couple can significantly improve their changes of mental success by devoting as little as 15minutes a day exclusively to each other. For instance, you could wake up a little earlier and spend the extra time in bed cuddling, and reaffirming your love for each other.

Love your spouse in the way he/she wants to be loved: we often make mistake of assuming that the things that touch our hearts the most deeply will affect our partner in the same way. If you don't already know, find out what your spouse yearns for, and then deliver it with love.

Take care of your appearance: Look your best for your spouse. Lose the ratty sweat pants or frayed sweater he/she hates so much you can find other comfortable clothes that aren't a complete turn-off for your partner.

Remain faithful; Alford-cooper (2010) studies 576 couples who had been married for 50years or more in 1998, she released her findings in the book for keeps: marriages that last a lifetime in her study, she found that 95% of the spouse agreed that fidelity was essential to a successful marriage and 94 percent agreed or strongly agreed that marriage is a long-team commitment to one person. 90 percent of the couples she surveyed said that they were happily married after 50 plus years.

Do things together; It is a common factor of Long-term happy marriage that the spouses regularly do things together that they find fun and exciting.

Spend time apart: You take a pottery course while your spouse plays hockey, you play bridge and your partner collects stamps. You don't have to love everything your partner loves, but you do have allowed him/her the freedom to pursue cherished hobbies.

Be friends with your partner: Gottman (2023) a psychologist who claims his research will predict with 91 percent accuracy whether a couple will stay together-says the key to marital happiness and success is friendship. Gottman based his findings on 25 years of marital research which he presented in his book the seven principles for making marriage work.

The terms of endearment; Top Los Angeles divorce attorney Phillips (as in Salihu, 2024) says flowers, candy, cards and gift are all wonderful tokens of love, but if you really want your romance to last, you must practice some marriage-saving steps. She advises coupled to spell out the basic of their relationship in a yearly contract - Says "I love you" every day. This is especially important when you are not feeling the sensation of love, at these times; you have to actively generate it. Saying those three little words and performing loving gestures, will warm both you and your spouse's hearts.

It is obvious from the above that many individuals from different societies have different views about the marriage institution. Broken home is probably as old as marriage itself. Broken homes may be due to various causes as enumerated above. Children from broken homes are made to bear the negative effects of the situation in which they find themselves, that is their parents not living together. They are more likely to face problems such as lack of proper care in terms of inadequate school materials, fees and irregular attendance in school, little or no time may be given to private studies after school hours.

It is imperative for parents to know that broken homes affect their children more than anything, therefore they should avoid it. They should try to show maximum affection, attention, recognition and approval to their children. They should also take interest in observing the activities

in which their children engage in at their leisure time. When corrections are given at an earlier period or stage in a child's life far reaching rewards are often recorded.

1.2.7 Discussion in the Context of Existing Literature

Comprehensive understanding of moral decadence requires first the meaning of morality. The term 'morality' is derived from the Latin plural word 'morale' meaning 'manner' or 'morals' which means generally accepted code of conduct in a society (Andy-philip and Zhiya2017 pp 10). In this regard, moral decadence can be understood as a decline or deterioration in the accepted standards of behaviour and values within a society. The educational system, which is expected to serve as an important avenue for moral formation, has also been affected by this development. Andy- Philip and Zhiya, (2017 pp 34) state that the educational system is losing its moral and social values. Our higher institutions of learning have been beclouded with indecent dressing most especially the female students.

The manifestation of moral decadence among young people can also be observed in behaviours that have serious social, educational and moral consequences. Yaksat, John and Zhiya (2017 pp 5) observed that drug abuse and alcoholism seem to have become a prominent social problem in Nigeria especially among our undergraduates. Similarly, teenage pregnancy constitutes another important concern associated with the moral and social challenges confronting young people. According to Umaru and Zhiya (2017 pp 21), it is often assumed that all teenage pregnancies are accidental but this is not always the case. Some teenagers actively plan to become pregnant or don't through contraception, knowing that pregnancy is a real possibility.

These challenges also have implications for the family, particularly the responsibilities of Christian parents in providing moral, spiritual and emotional guidance to their children. According to Zhiya (2023 pp 126), Christian mothers and child care is an interesting discussion that encompasses both religious beliefs and parenting practices. He therefore recommended that Christian women civil servants should prayerfully ask God for strength in carrying out their dual duties on daily basis. The responsibility of Christian families extends beyond childcare to demonstrating compassion, care and social responsibility towards vulnerable members of society. In the same vain, Zhiya (2015 pp 95) recommended that Pentecostal Ministers should keep on educating their congregations on the Biblical teaching concerning the plight of widows and encourage them to care for widows.

The development of sound moral values also requires the cultivation of virtues such as peace, righteousness, selflessness and responsible use of material resources. *Shalom* and *Tsedeq* must be won; for the prizes for those who win the war against self, selflessness, self-centeredness, the war against hate, the war against passion and against envy (Andy-philip, 2018 105). Similarly, material prosperity should not be viewed merely in terms of personal accumulation but also in relation to responsible Christian stewardship. Wealth can be enjoyed and employed at the same time if our purpose is to honor God (Andy-philip and Okoronkwo, 2023 pp).

Christian morality also requires commitment, sacrifice and faithfulness to Christian convictions, particularly in challenging circumstances. Many of the early Christians knew they would likely die for their faith but chose to follow Christ at an cost (Andy-philip and Alamu pp 99). This demonstrates the importance of developing moral courage and commitment among Christians, especially in an environment where competing social values may influence young people.

Against this background, religious education has an important role to play in addressing contemporary moral challenges. In a religiously pluralistic African society, moral education should not merely transmit abstract religious principles but should engage learners with their cultural and religious contexts. To leverage syncretism and dialogue in shaping moral values, educators most adopt innovative, context-specific pedagogies that integrate CRE and ATR practices into religious education curricula (Zhiya, Attah and Jacob, 2025 pp15). This is why (Zhiya, Ohwriovbe and Jacob, 2025 pp 59) observed that the integration of storytelling from CRS and ATR in religious education offers a transformative approach to navigating religious pluralism in African context.

Taken together, these perspectives demonstrate that moral decadence is a multidimensional problem involving individual behaviour, family responsibilities, educational institutions, religious commitment and the wider social environment. Consequently, Christian Religious Education can contribute to moral transformation by connecting biblical teachings with learners' lived experiences, cultural contexts and contemporary social realities.

1.2.8 Suggestions

From the discussion, the paper made the following suggestions based on the importance of Sunday school in Nigerian churches:

a. Parents and guardians should make deliberate efforts to provide consistent spiritual guidance, emotional support, and moral i1.2.7nstruction to children, even in situations of family separation.
b. Churches and religious organizations should intensify counseling programmes and mentorship activities targeted at students from broken homes to help strengthen their spiritual and emotional well-being.

c. School authorities and teachers should provide guidance and counselling services within schools to support students facing family-related challenges.

d. Government and educational stakeholders should organize family-life education programmes aimed at promoting effective communication, conflict resolution, and family stability.

e. Students should be encouraged to actively participate in positive peer groups, school fellowship activities, and church programmes that promote spiritual growth and moral values.

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