



Assessing the Challenges of Schooling among Adolescents in Skipped Generation Households in Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

Background: Skipped generation households (SGH) where grandparents are increasingly filling the parenting gaps are on the increase in the country. This study explored grandparental involvement in the family structure and schooling of adolescents in Ile-Ife town, South-West, Nigeria.

Methodology: This cross-sectional study involves 408 secondary school adolescents (10-19 years) using facilitated self-administered questionnaires to gather information about students' socio-demographics, type of family structure, and schools' academic performance.

Results: More than half of adolescents lived with biological parents at the time of survey while almost one-third (32.3%) lived in SGH. Almost all adolescents in SGH reported that their grandparents contribute financially to their care. Grandparental involvement significantly influenced the type of school attended by adolescents in SGH ($p=0.025$) and academic performance ($p=0.038$). Majority of adolescents living in SGH are enrolled in public schools and have poor academic grades in the year preceding the survey compared to those living with biological parents.

Conclusion: Grandparental involvement influenced the type of school and was associated with poor academic performance of adolescents living in SGH. The study advocates a social support system for adolescents in skipped generation households while the grandparents who are mostly overburdened can also be supported through community nested cash transfer program.

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INTRODUCTION

Grandparents have increasingly begun to fill the “parenting gaps” left by their children.¹ This trend is attributed to increasing number of grandparents taking up roles of biological parents as child caregivers either due in part to death of one or both biological parents,^{2,3} or due to neglect and abandonment.^{4,5} In Anglo-American¹ and African societies,^{6,7} grandparents are family historians as they teach family cultural practices. They also contribute financially in the upbringing and welfare

of their children and grandchildren, particularly, in a grandparent headed household. It is however common to notice a high level of and varying extent of grandparent involvement in typical Nigerian families. The roles they play include taking care of newly born infants, occasional visitations, being the custodial grandparents or sole guardian of the children depending on the situation.

Grandparents take on primary caregiving role due to culture norms, prolonged life expectancy, economic migration, ethno-religious crisis and

death of biological parents HIV/AIDs etc. A household survey examining living arrangements of children in the US found an increase in the proportion of children living in the same household with a grandparent from 7% in 1991 to 11% in 2009.⁸ Dunifon in 2013 reported incarceration and drug use, among biological parents, as the dominant factors responsible for this rise in prevalence among African American children in the United States of America. In sub-Saharan Africa, countries higher in HIV/AIDS prevalence had more skipped generation households.⁹ Although Nigeria has been reported to have relatively higher estimated incidence of children living with their biological parents compared to other West African countries, the North Central region in Nigeria particularly has the highest number of grandparent headed families 38.4% followed by the South West with a prevalence rate of 37.63%.¹⁰

Research consistently reports that children and adolescents in lone-parent and step-families have on average higher probabilities of difficulties in their psychosocial, health and school adjustment than those growing up in two-parent biological families.¹¹ A study found that parental availability and household organization influence prosocial behaviors of adolescents, such as academic achievement and decreased participation in risk-taking activities.^{12,13} In developed countries, children living with custodial grandparents because they have a kinship care arrangement through foster care, appear to have higher rates of behavioral and socio-emotional problems than children not in the child welfare system.¹⁴ However, a study by Dunifon 2013, found no evidence that the quality of relationship between grandparents and their grandchildren was associated with youths' grades or risky behaviors.¹⁵ In Nigeria, the foster care and kinship care systems are rather fluid arrangements with little support for grandparent caregivers with its effects on the grandchildren being largely undocumented.

Beyond the cultural acceptability of the practice of grandparental caregiving in Nigeria,^{6,7} the dominant factor driving the increasing prevalence of skipped generation households is largely undocumented.

Most publications on this subject emerged from developed countries. It is important to study the influence of such alternative family structure on academic achievements of in-school adolescents from an African perspective. Also, previous studies on adolescents' schooling did not capture the peculiarities of adolescents in skipped generation households. The significance of this research is to provide academics, social workers, parents, grandparents, guardians, counselors and activists' empirical evidence of the effects of family structure on the schooling and academic achievements of adolescents in Nigeria. The theoretical basis for this research is the ecological model perspective proposed by Bronfenbrennen (1979), which shows factors in the wider ecology of children, their parents, grandparents and the community that influences grandparent-grandchild involvement.¹⁶ Also, Tan et al (2010: p.1009) in their study emphasized the need to examine adolescents report on grandparent involvement from an ecological perspective.¹

This study explored the influence of grandparents on the family structure and schooling of adolescents in Ife Central Local Government, Ile Ife, Osun State, South West Nigeria. Specifically, we determined the prevalence of adolescents' family structures with respect to presence or absence of grandparent, assessed the perceptions of in-school adolescents about the pattern of grandparental involvement and determined the effects of SGH on academic and schooling of the adolescents.

METHODOLOGY

The cross-sectional study was conducted in Ile-Ife, Osun state, Nigeria, among adolescents' (10-19 years) in public (middle and high) and private secondary schools. Using a prevalence of 37.63% of grandparents headed households (NDHS, 2013), the minimum sample size calculated (361) and a non-response of 13% brought the sample to 408. Adolescents were selected via a multistage sampling technique. The first stage entailed the selection of four public schools (2 middle and 2 high public schools) and four private secondary schools, by balloting (simple random sampling). In the second

stage, three classes each were purposively selected from each school. Thirdly, an arm of each class was randomly selected by balloting.

Finally from each arm, students were selected using the systematic sampling technique until 408 students were recruited. In all, a total of 408 questionnaires were administered. However, 400 valid questionnaires were utilized because, eight incompletely filled questionnaires were discarded.

The 59-item questionnaires administered elicited information on socio-demographic characteristics, family structure, pattern of grandparental involvement, in-school adolescents' perceptions about grandparental involvement and factors influencing grandparental involvement on adolescents' schooling.

The outcome variables include the proportion of the different adolescents, family structures with respect to presence or absence of grandparents, and adolescents, perception on the pattern of grandparents involvement. They were both measured using discrete scale. The Academic achievement was based on their class grade using previous year overall average score and was categorised into; poor, good, very good and excellent, and subsequently measured using a discrete scale. While, the type of school (either private or public) attended by adolescents in SGH specifically provided a picture of the availability of funds for education in the family as private schools tend to be more expensive. SPSS version 17.0 software package was used for univariate and bivariate analyses of obtained data.

Univariate statistics was presented as frequency counts (with percentage), means with standard deviation while bivariate analyses were used to test for association between type of households adolescents, belong to (SGH and non SGH) and type of school (private or public); academic performance; some socio demographic characteristics using chi square test - levels of statistical significance were set at $p < 0.05$. Results were presented as tables, graphs and in prose form.

Ethical approval was sought and obtained from the Ethics and Research of the IPH, OAU, Ile-Ife.

Written consent to the school authority of the selected schools was obtained from the Ministry of Education, Local Education Office, Ife Central LG, Ile-Ife, Osun State. Verbal assent was sought from each student after adequate explanation of the study objectives. Participation of adolescents was voluntary. Confidentiality and data security was assured. The participants had the liberty to exit the study at any point.

RESULTS

Sample Demographics: The mean age of adolescents surveyed was 14.5 years with a standard deviation of 1.3, almost half (45%) were middle adolescents (14-15 years old) with slightly more males than females (56% vs 44%). Majority of the respondents in both SGH and non SGH were Christians, of Yoruba ethnicity and had good to excellent grades in class. (Table I).

Table I: Socio-demographic characteristics of Adolescents with respect to Type of Households

Variables	SGH		Non SGH		Total	
	(n=129)	(%)	(n=271)	(%)	(n=400)	(%)
Age (years)						
10-13	49	37.9	96	35.4	145	36.2
14-16	63	48.8	117	43.2	180	45.0
17-19	17	13.2	58	21.4	75	18.8
Gender						
Male	75	58.1	148	54.6	223	55.8
Female	54	41.9	123	45.4	177	44.2
Religion						
Christian	111	86	217	80.1	328	82.0
Muslim	18	14	48	17.7	66	16.5
Traditional	0		6	2.2	6	1.5
Ethnicity						
Yoruba	112	86.8	217	80.1	329	82.2
Igbo	10	7.7	37	13.7	47	11.8
Hausa	5	3.9	11	4	16	4.0
Others	2	1.6	6	2.2	8	2.0
Grade in Class						
Poor	28	21.7	33	12.2	61	15.3
Good	23	17.8	39	14.4	62	15.5
Very Good	26	20.2	75	27.7	101	25.2
Excellent	52	40.3	124	45.7	176	44.0

Prevalence of adolescents, family structures with respect to presence/absence of grandparents: Most (77.5%) of the adolescents had living grandparents with almost a third (32.3%) of them residing in a grandparent headed household, while two-fifths (40.5%) of them lived with their parents and grandparents in multi-generational households. (Table II).

Table II: Prevalence of Adolescents' Family Structure with respect to Grandparents.

Grandparents status	Frequency (n=400)	%
Adolescents with living grandparents	310	77.5
No living Grandparents	90	22.5
Family Structures of adolescents with grandparents		
Grandparent headed family	129	32.2
Multigenerational Household ^a	162	40.5
Non-Residential Grandparents	19	4.8
No living Grand parents	90	22.5

^aMultigenerational households: Adolescents living with at least a biological parent and a grandparent.

Adolescents' opinion about the pattern of grandparental involvement in SGH: About three quarters of the respondents' grandparents were involved with payment of school fees, feeding and other basic needs (76%, 73% and 74% respectively). About two-third (66%) of the adolescents were not comfortable having sexual communication with their grandparents (Table III).

Relationship between grandparental involvement and adolescents schooling: Grandparental involvement significantly influenced; type of school system ($p=0.025$), majority of adolescents in SGH attended public schools; academic performance ($p=0.038$), most adolescents in SGH had poor grades in previous year. (Table IV).

Table III: Pattern of Grandparent Involvement in SGH

Variable	Frequency (n=129)	Percentage (%)
Grandparent pays school fees		
Yes	98	76
No (parents and other sources)	31	24
Grandparent cater for feeding		
Yes	94	72.9
No (parents and other sources)	35	27.1
Grandparent pay for basic needs^b		
Yes	95	73.6
No (parents and other sources)	34	26.4
Sexuality communication with grandparents		
Very comfortable	6	4.7
Comfortable	29	22.5
Not comfortable	94	72.8
Reasons for living with grandparent		
Financial reasons	81	62.8
Migration	23	17.8
Death/Sickness	12	9.3
Separation/divorce	8	6.2
Incarceration	1	0.8
Unknown	4	03.1

^bBasic needs includes; clothing and utility bills

Table IV: Relationship between type of Household of Adolescents and Socio-demographic Characteristics

Variables	Type of Households		Total N=400 (%)	Statistical comparison
	(SGH) n=129(%)	(None SGH) n=271(%)		
Type of school				
Public	92(71.3)	162(59.8)	254(63.5)	$\chi^2 = 5.021$ P-value=0.025 df= 1
Private	37(28.7)	109(40.2)	146(36.5)	
Grade of adolescent in school				
Poor	28(21.7)	33(12.2)	61(15.3)	$\chi^2 = 8.416$ p-value=0.038 df= 3
Good	23(17.8)	39(14.4)	62(15.5)	
Very good	26(20.2)	75(27.7)	101(25.3)	
Excellent	52(40.3)	124(45.7)	176(44.0)	
Gender				
Male	75(58.1)	148(54.6)	223(55.7)	$\chi^2 = 0.441$ P-value=0.507 df= 1
Female	54(41.9)	123(45.4)	177(44.3)	
Family structure				
Monogamous	97(75.2)	223(82.3)	320(80.0)	$\chi^2 = 2.749$ p-value=0.097 df = 1
Polygamous	32(24.8)	48(17.7)	80(20.0)	
Biological Father's level of education				
No education	4(3.1)	8(3.0)	12(3.0)	$\chi^2 = 4.872$ p-value=0.181 df = 3
Primary	19(14.7)	23(8.5)	42(10.5)	
Secondary	41(31.8)	78(28.8)	119(29.8)	
Tertiary	65(50.4)	162(59.7)	227(56.7)	
Biological Mother's level of education				
No education	8(6.2)	14(5.2)	22(5.5)	$\chi^2 = 1.701$ p-value=0.637 df = 3
Primary	17(13.2)	32(11.8)	49(12.3)	
Secondary	42(32.6)	76(28.1)	118(29.5)	
Tertiary	62(48.1)	149(54.9)	211(52.8)	

DISCUSSION

Pattern of Grandparental Involvement in the Identified Family Structures

It is common in this part of the world to have grandparents live in households rather than general nursing homes due to cultural beliefs that children should give back to their parents at old age. The study considered grandparental involvement in three major domains; grandparent headed households, multigenerational households and non-residential grandparents. About a third (32%) of adolescents in Ife-Central LGA live in grandparent headed households; this corroborated the NDHS 2013 report that observed that 31.23% of Nigerian adolescents in the South West live in grandparent headed households. Many Nigerian adolescents have grandparents that pay their school fees, feed them and provide their basic needs. According to the research from Investec Wealth and Investment, a fifth (19%) of parents rely or plan to rely on grandparents to assist them in paying private school fees for their children (Doughty, 2015) – while 26%, grandparents cater for their basic needs like food, shelter and clothing. This could be due to the natural

impulse of financially empowered grandparents to filling the parental support gap.

Effects of Grandparent Headed Household on Adolescents Schooling

Most of the adolescents in skipped generation households indicated financial reasons as the commonest reason for their living arrangement indicating that their grandparents were involved in their family structure for financial assistance, to aid their poor parents. Other reasons for the living arrangements were due to the death or illness of either the father or the mother, migration of either or both parents for work or study, parental separation and divorce and incarceration of either of their parents. In the USA, a study identified two major factors - incarcerations and drug use among biological parents as commonest reasons for black African-American grandchildren transitioning into SGH.¹⁵ In our study, incarceration accounted for less than 1% reason for living with a grandparent. The level of education of the parents had no significant contribution to how many of the respondents live with their grandparents. However, unemployed fathers had the highest incidence of children in grandparent headed households, this shows that poverty may be a major causal factor for the increase in grandparent headed households. Our findings are in line with the result of previous studies in the USA that found grandchildren in SGH having poorer outcomes than children raised by their biological parents.^{15,17,18}

This study had several limitations; the results obtained may not be generalized at the national level. Secondly, the ideal would have been to verify information provided by the adolescents from their primary caregivers. In future, longitudinal studies with larger sample size would provide accurate causality.

Overall, this study provided baseline evidence that grandparental involvement in family structure is rapidly increasing in Southwest Nigeria. The major reason for the rise in grandparent headed family was for financial reasons rather than family bonding, which is defined by cultural beliefs in this part of the world. Grandparental involvement influenced the academic performance and type of school the

respondent attended with those in public schools having more grandparental influence.

It is recommended that schools, communities and relevant government educational boards and agencies should pay attention to alternative family arrangements and their influence on the developmental trajectory of in-school children. Schools should involve grandparents and other guardians by incorporating them in Parents Teachers Association (PTA) meetings, especially in public schools where grandparental involvement is highest. In Nigeria, grandparents help cushion the effect of weak foster care systems, therefore, government should implement policies that empower custodial grandparents socially and financially.

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