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**IMPACTS OF MARITAL CONFLICTS ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN OYO TOWNSHIP**

Olurotimi O. AKANNI, Ph.D

EMMANUEL ALAYANDE UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, OYO

akanniolurotimi@gmail.com.

AND

Olugbenga Oladapo Ayena Ph. D

ayenaaa@eauedoyo.edu.ng

EMMANUEL ALAYANDE UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, OYO

Abstract

This research investigated the impact of marital conflicts on the academic performance of secondary school students. The population for the study comprised all secondary school teachers in Oyo township. The the sample for the study consisted of 200 secondary school students which was composed in multi-stages. Two hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The result revealed among others that the marital conflicts has significant influence on the academic performance of secondary school students based on gender ($r = 3.11$, $p < .05$) and a significant difference was also found between marital conflicts and academic performance based on class-levels ($r = 2.45$, $p < .05$). Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that the government and non-governmental organisations should organize workshops /seminars on the influence of marital conflicts on the academic performance of their children.

Keywords: Marriage, Conflict, Marital conflict, Academic performance, Parents

INTRODUCTION

Marriage between couple exists when man and woman consent to live together and establish
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their family until death. It is a relationship that is expected to be built on a long lasting joy and mutual trust. Society approves this union by accepting this as marriage. Marriage is defined legally as a union or contract between husband and wife. It brings the husband and wife in a special kind of social arrangement that serves several purposes for societal existence. Marriage as an institution functions to maintain the wellbeing of members of the family and society at large.

Marriage has existed for as long as there have been humans. It can be considered an institution that has existed ever since man first set foot in the cosmos. Marriage is the union of a man and a woman from different backgrounds to become husband and wife and spent most of their life together. Asumptha (2025) stated that an unstable marriage is one that is not structurally intact, as a result of quarrels, fights, separation or even divorce. Such marriages are characterized with frequent quarrels, disagreements and fights between couples in the home.

Kitson and Sussman, (2022) opined that marital instability as a form of marital conflict is defined as ongoing conflict in marriage because of communication problems, disagreements about parenting or gender roles, financial difficulties, untrustworthiness, infidelity, or alcohol and drug abuse. Marital instability is a situation whereby a couple in a home is going through relational difficulties.

Amato (2021) stressed that marital conflict affects the affective and cognitive states along the related actions that are precedent to terminating a relationship. Okpechi (2017) observed that people marry for many reasons, such as love, happiness, companionship and desire to have

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children, physical attraction or desire to escape from an unhappy situation . Asumptha (2025)

views marital crisis or problems between couples that could result in marriage breakdown through separation, desertion or divorce.

Marriage is a commitment with love and responsibility for peace, happiness and development of strong family relationship. Marriage is a socially legitimate sexual union, which begins with admiration and undertaken with some ideas of permanence. The students learning should be organized, sequenced and supervised by the instructor so that the new knowledge and skills are consequently gained (Denga, 2014). Fincham (2017) opined that marital conflicts have implications for mental, physical and family health. Marital conflicts may be functional when properly managed, allowing partners to know more of each other; understand each other and develop a stronger sense of unity (Siegert & Stamp, 2016). Morrison and Charlie (2015) opined that marital conflict is associated with a variety of indicators such as poor conduct disorders, anxiety and aggression. Exposure to marital conflict might influence married student directly or indirectly through its effect on their academics. The problem of marital instability can be traced to the rapid growth rate of urbanization and industrialization in Nigeria. The economy is growing and it requires a lot of manpower (both skilled and unskilled). This has aroused every member of the family to become one way or the other involved in the economic growth of the nation (Asumptha, 2025).

Marital conflict can lead to undesirable outcomes. Severe adverse reactions could trail marital withdrawal, verbal hospitality, nonverbal hostility, personal threat, physical distress, personal insult and defensiveness (Cunimings & Morey, 2015). The implications of marital conflict often transcend the individuals directly involved in the relationship. It has been observed that marital

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conflict has more negative outcomes on undergraduate students whose parents engage in extreme marital conflict tend to be worse off than whose parents are divorced (Morrinson & Coiro, 2014).

Asumptha (2025) expressed that the idea of managing more than one wife might lead to an end of the family. The habits that either the wife or the husband is involved in extra marital affairs which are perpetuated by some men and some women might lead to an end of the family. The habits that either the wife or the husband is addicted to smoking or drinking also lead to marital dissolution. Lack of trust in many families amongst the couples is wrecking marriages today.

Marriage is considered a cultural and universal phenomenon and is usually formalized through a wedding ceremony in many cultures (Ojukwu, Woko & Onuoha, 2016). A marriage that is unstable lacks structural integrity due to arguments, fights, separation, or even divorce. These marriages are characterized by frequent arguments, disagreements, and domestic fights between the partners. Marital conflicts happen when one or both persons are self- centred. One selfishly wants what he wants without consideration for the capabilities, plans, or goals of his spouse. Jeynes (2020) opined that peer influences also threaten the marital solidarity if care is not taken by couples. As a result of outside influences, irrational decisions are made to the detriment of one's wish and this might lead to a marital crisis. Other factors such as education, illegitimate children, religion and infertility of the wife also initiate instability in the marriage (Jeynes, 2020).

Asumptha (2025) described marital conflict as a situation whereby the couples deliberately decided to separate for one reason or the other which is associated with separation, divorce and widowhood.

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The situation in most homes is such that even the children have become the burden bearers just like the popular saying that; “when two elephant fights, the grass suffers”. This ugly experience often many a times leaves them emotionally and psychologically imbalance with feelings of depression, anger and even frustration as they are cut-in-between sides of their parent. These unpleasant experiences of children in the home front could significantly affect a child's concentration in school, thereby impinging on his academic performance (Asumptha 2025).

Marital instability has been observed as a contemporary social problem because it significantly affects a number of homes especially within the Nigerian society. Marital conflict occurs more often with couples who were forcefully given out of marriage between the average ages of 17 and 25 years. Couple should try to know each other well and should see each other at their best and worst conditions. Fully marriages carry some of the common causes of conflict and friction among couples that is a wealthy man or woman getting married without proper courtship and after a very short time of marriage couple are separated or divorce due to in compatibility. This as well will eventually aggravate marital conflict which might influence married student's academic performance and their self-esteem.

Anderson (2015) argued that the institution of marriage is founded on the principle that men and women possess complementary qualities, the biological necessity of both a man and a woman for reproduction, and the recognition that children benefit from the presence of both a mother and a father. The husband and wife's traditional roles and responsibilities include cohabitating, limiting their sexual activity to one another, sharing financial resources, and being acknowledged as the children's primary caregivers who prioritize their wellbeing and well-informed education. Formal

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interactions, however, can only occur in a stable, mutually supportive family setting. Marriage is meant to be stable and eternal, but recent changes in family structures and marital values have redefined marriage institutions in most societies, including Nigeria. This has serious implications for the overall growth and well-being of the family's legitimate children as it becomes more fragile and unstable. With potential repercussions for people's well-being and social dynamics, marital instability—characterized by conflicts, separation, and divorce within marital relationships—has become a common problem across various societies. Marital instability is characterized by arguments in which the couples involved perceive a threat to their needs, interests, or concerns (Katzenback and Smith cited in Oyeromi, Olaolu, Fadokun and Omiyale, 2018). It is also viewed as a struggle between couples who have divergent needs, ideas, beliefs, values, or goals.

The potential impact of marital instability on students' academic performance is one area of particular worry. Academic performance is an important aspect of a student's life because it shapes their educational and future career opportunities. The dynamics of a student's family, including their marital status, have a big impact on how happy and capable of succeeding in school they are. Marital instability can cause a child to experience a variety of stressors, which can affect their emotional and psychological health and possibly have an impact on how engaged and successful they are in school. It was observed that there is an awareness of the importance of the home environment or family on students' academic performances. (Bradley and Crown, 2022) states that an undergraduate's social, economic, emotional and psychological state can be greatly affected by the home and this points back to the parents since they are the first socializing

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agents in his/her life which implies that parents therefore have important roles to play in ensuring that their children acquire the appropriate social, psychological, moral and academic development.

Simple evidence suggests that marital instability contributes to social, academic, and emotional issues like stress, tension, lack of motivation, and frustration to some extent. The academic performance of a child is undoubtedly negatively impacted by these manifestations (Alika & Edosa, 2012). Conflicts are very much associated with negative effects and poor to poor adjustment problems in couples irrespective of whether they remain married or separated. The frequency and intensity of this conflict can impact negatively on the couples various endeavors including educational pursuit and academic performance. Fomby and Cherlin (2007) cited in Oyeromi, et al (2018) opined that transitioning from a marital stable to an unstable home is frequently accompanied by declines in children's well-being and academic performance. Children are frequently neglected when marital conflicts occurs in homes where there are signs like fights and arguments between couples. And such careless neglect on the part of parents in providing the support and guidance required for their children's academic endeavors may result in children's subpar academic performance. Contradictory results have been found regarding the academic achievement of students by gender. Studies revealed that boys in conflicting families have more adjustment issues than girls According to some studies (Guidubaldo & Perry, 1985; Hetherington, 1985; Kaye, 1989 cited in Oyeromi, et al, 2018). Although some researchers found no difference in the effects of marital instability on boys and girls, while other researchers found more detrimental effects for girls (Oyeromi, et al 2018). Eliot (2017) expressed that students' academic performance is more likely to be experienced and evidenced when students

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feel personally validated and believe that their effort matters and can influence or control the prospects of their academic success. Granting the importance of academic performance is rarely questioned, however the factors that influence and mediate it have been elusive. Bradley and Crown (2022) opined that the consequences of marital conflicts on Students Academics Family setting and background is the key to an undergraduate's life in and outside school which has the most important influence on their academic achievement and consists of factors such as parental practices and aspired family size, marital instabilities, material characteristics, neighborhood, divorce cases, socio economic status, single parenting, amongst others , the environment inside the home is the Basic socializing agent and effects on undergraduate's interest in school and aspiration for the future.

Kaye cited in Oyeromi, Olaolu, Fadokun, and Omiyale (2018) that boys and girls perform worse on achievement tests when compared to kids from intact families. Conflict occurs between two or more people who disagree on certain issues that threaten their respective goals values or needs. How they participate in such a disagreement determines to a great extent how heated the conflict is. Marital conflict is an inevitable aspect of life. Sasse (2017) stated that conflict is a disagreement/struggle between two or more people. Conflict is bound to be worse between people with stronger emotional intimacy. Many people engage in conflict mainly because they do not employ good decision-making procedures. Fighting is a matter of power-sharing, that is, everyone would like to get his or her way and no one likes to lose. Many couples neglect consideration of how they are going to make decisions and consequently often end up fighting about how the decision was made, even though they have little difficulty with the decision itself. Anger in the family could result in avoiding responsibility, neglect, thoughtlessness,

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Statement of the problem

These problems that bring about marital conflict is attributed to lack of understanding among couples, poverty, background, social influence, early marriage etc. all these have their consequences which are fighting, quarrelling, maltreatment, emotional stress, neglect, lack of family affection, being away from home which has resulted to a great number of divorces and separation. Children who experience relatively high level of marital conflict were associated with having less secure attachments with parents and peers (Lindsey, S. et. al. 2009). These factors are the most common emotional support structures among these individuals.

Marital conflicts influenced children and had predicted delinquency and depressive symptoms in adolescents, likewise adolescent children's mal-adaptive behaviours appears to place a strain on their parents marriage. These issues can affect the academic performance of students from such families. It was against this background that this study was necessitated.

HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference between Marital conflict and academic performance of secondary school students based on gender
2. There is no significant difference between marital conflict and academic performance of secondary school students based parental educational background

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A descriptive research design was adopted for the study which affords the researcher the ability to collect relevant information's needed for the research work. The population for this study comprised all the secondary school students in Oyo metropolis. A sample of 200 students was selected for the study and it was composed in multi-stages. The instrument used for data collection was a self- developed questionnaire titled "Influence of Marital Conflicts on the Academic Performance of Secondary School Students (IMCAPSS). The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient which yielded an index of 0.79. The researchers personally administered the instruments to the respondents and t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Analysis of Socio-Demographic Characteristic of the Respondents

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Class-levels

Class-levels	Frequency	Percentage
S.S.S 1	80	40.00
S.S.S 2	120	60.00
Total	200	100.0

Table 1 revealed that 80 representing 40.00% of the respondents were in S.S.S 1, 120 of them representing 60.00% were in S.S.S 2. Therefore the above result implies that majority of the secondary school students were in S.S.S 2.

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Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Parental Educational Background

Parental educational background	Frequency	Percentage
Literate	90	45.00
Illiterate	110	55.00
Total	200	100.0

Table 2 revealed that 90 representing 45.00% of the respondents were from the literate parents and 110 of them or 55.00% were from illiterate parents. The above result implies that majority of the respondents were from illiterate parents.

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between Marital conflict and academic performance of secondary school students based on gender

T-test difference on the Marital conflict and academic performance of secondary school students based on gender

Dependent Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit.
Marital conflicts on Academic performance	Male	80	66.42	32.75	198	3.11	1.96
	Female	120	84.31	73.24			

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 From Table 3 above, the calculated t-value of 3.11 was greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that the marital conflicts played significant roles on the academic performance of secondary school students based on gender.

Ho2: There is no significant difference between Marital conflict and academic performance of secondary school students based on gender

T-test difference on the Marital conflict and academic performance of secondary school students based on Class-levels

Dependent Variable	Class- levels	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit.
Marital conflicts on Academic performance	S.S.S1	80	51.43	28.52	198	2.45	1.96
	S.S.S2	120	72.21	55.83			

From Table 4 above, the calculated t-value of 2.45 was greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that the Marital conflicts played significant roles on the secondary school students' academic performance based on their on class-levels.

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The findings of the study revealed that there was significant difference between marital conflicts and students' academic performance based on gender. This result is agreement with Asumptha (2025) who opined that both male and female students exhibit maladaptive behaviour as a result of marital conflicts. In the same vein, the findings is in collaboration with that of Oyeromi, Olaolu, Fadokun and Omiyale (2018) who found that there is no significant difference between male and female students in their experience of family marital conflict. Kaye cited in Oyeromi, Olaolu, Fadokun, and Omiyale (2018) that boys and girls perform worse on achievement tests when compared to kids from intact families. The finding suggests that, in the context of marital instability, both male and female students are similarly affected in terms of their academic achievement. This highlights a level of gender equality in how family dynamics, specifically marital instability, influence students' performance in educational settings. Both male and female students might experience similar emotional and psychological challenges stemming from family disruptions, which in turn impact their ability to focus, study effectively, and engage in their education.

There was significant difference between Marital conflict and academic performance of secondary school students based on class-levels. The finding is in tandem with that of Clarke, Vandell, McCartney, Owen, and Booth (2000) who found that marital conflicts at homes have negative impact on family characteristics and processes like economic position and parental responsiveness, and are associated with the children's cognitive performance. A similar finding was reported by Sun and Liin (2002) who found out that children in separated or divorced

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families performed more poorly on tests of cognitive ability at the age of 15 and 24 months than that of children from continuously married and intact families. This situation proves that parental marital conflict or instability affects students' academic achievement in line with their class-levels Kitson and Sussman (2022).

CONCLUSION

This research investigated influence of Marital conflicts on the academic performance of secondary school students. Marriage is a mutual agreement between man and a woman to become husband and wife. It was discovered from the research that that marital conflicts adversely affects the academic performance of secondary school students . The outcome of the research ascertained that girls students are more affected negatively by marital conflicts amidst their parents. The research also shows that the marital conflicts played significant roles on the academic performance of secondary school students in tandem with their class –levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The school management through the Parent-teachers' forum should communicate the impacts of marital conflicts on the academic performance of their wards which must be avoided or well managed
2. Teachers should be able to detect the children who are experiencing poor academic performance via their interaction in the classroom and channel it to the school management

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3. The school must employ professionally trained counsellor / psychologist that will be handling the psychological issues of the students
4. The government and non-governmental organisations must organize workshop / seminars for parents on the influence of marital conflicts on the academic performance of their children.
5. The religious houses are admonished to preach about stable marriage implications and dangers of marital conflicts.
6. Parents are admonished to make efforts to resolve their marital crisis before it escalates into what affects their children.

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