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Article

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MARITAL CONFLICT FACTORS AND STUDENTS ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL IN ALIMOSHO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Generally, formal, informal, or non-formal education is adjudged to be essential for critical thinking, that is central to national development. However, children from homes facing marital crisis continue to encounter challenges that undermine their education. Both government and non-governmental organizations had taken initiatives to address marital disputes in the study area without much success. Against this backdrop, this study sought to investigate the elements that contribute to marital conflict and its impact on academic performance of students in junior high schools, Lagos State. The study covers Alimosho Local Government Area (LGA), Lagos State. Bowen Family and Structural Functionalism theories were used to explain issue under discuss. Descriptive survey research design, primary and secondary data from both qualitative and quantitative approaches were adopted for the study. A simple random sampling technique was utilized and the administration of 142 research questionnaire among respondents to gather data on marital conflict impact on children's academic performance. Findings showed that, marital dispute occurs in the study area, but not quite noticeable; domestic abuse, poor communication among others, were the conflict triggers. The study concluded that, victims from these homes, often had poor academic performance due to psychological problems. The study suggested provision of counselling services, establishing laws that deter marital aggression, and awareness campaign on the dangers of marital dispute on academic performance of children.

Keywords: Academic, Marital conflict, Performance, Students.

Introduction

Formal, informal, or non-formal education is essential for fostering critical thinking and reasoning abilities. The goal of whole education is to create mature, well-rounded people who can reach their full potential on all levels such as spiritual, intellectual, and physical (Olaoye & Adebayo, 2012). Because education is crucial for both economic growth and global competitiveness, the majority of countries place a high priority on it. Gaining abilities, information, values, and beliefs is the process of education. Children from conflict-ridden marriages may perform poorly in school because they are more stressed and find it harder to concentrate (Hurlock, 2011). Disagreements between persons or groups that are marked by animosity and hostility are called conflicts. In addition to disagreements, marital conflict can also result from a lack of understanding between partners, which can cause furious arguments, violence, separation, and even divorce. Margolin (2007) asserted that, education is necessary to become a better, more well-rounded individual. One of the most important parts of a student's education is their academic performance, which includes presentations, plays, and musicals. Marks, teacher evaluations, and student-and teacher-set educational goals are used to evaluate it (Narad & Abdullah, 2016). Students' emotional, psychological, and mental development can be seriously threatened by marital strife, which can have a direct or indirect effect on their academic achievement. A man and a woman enter into a legal and emotional union through marriage, sharing tasks, financial resources, and emotional and physical intimacy (Omari, 1989). Marriage and parent-child relationships instill values that permeate the community and create steadfast devotional practices to communal life (Bradford, 2002).

Conflicts in marriage can have detrimental effects on children, couples in particular; and society at large. The repercussions include dropouts, alcoholism, hooliganism, armed robbery, and juvenile delinquency. The issue of marital problems requires immediate attention because the family unit is crucial to the growth of society. Societal peace is a function of peacebuilding values inculcated from the home front (Esere & Idowu, 2000). The pursuit of social objectives including growth, justice, advancement, liberty, safety, equity, and fairness depends on peace. From domestic to international, conflict impacts all facets of social life (Best, 2000). Marriage is not an exception to the rule that conflict is unavoidable in close relationships (Defrain & Olson (2000). Aggressive arguments and cordial expression of divergent opinions are two examples of destructive and constructive conflict relations (Cummings & Faircloth, 2008). Dispute relational issues in marriage have catastrophic impacts on children, leading to feelings of guilt, sadness, depression, and low self-esteem (Siti, et al., 2013). It may be difficult for young children to comprehend the logic behind their parents' arguments (Vander, et al., 2015). Children may have a hard time feeling secure in a household where there are marital disputes because stability and goodness might crumble and leave them feeling empty (Rodman, 2010). A vital part of life is marriage, yet little is known about what constitutes a fulfilling and enduring partnership. To lessen the effect of marital disputes on junior secondary school academic achievement, both official and non-governmental organizations have undertaken initiatives. Nonetheless, there is worry in the Alimosho local government region regarding the low academic achievement of pupils from dysfunctional households or high-conflict marriages. School dropouts are a result of this serious threat to society and youth. This study seeks ways to mitigate the effects of marital conflict factors on students' academic performance in public junior secondary schools in Alimosho Local Government Area, Lagos State, Nigeria, including communication problems, financial difficulties, and infidelity.

Marital conflict is a serious problem in marriage since it prevents spouses from interacting smoothly because of their different worldviews and cultural backgrounds (Craft et al, 2021). Children who grow up seeing their parents as equals may be greatly impacted by this dispute. In contrast, academic success is the direct result of learning and is evaluated over time using grades and scores. In an academic context, students' proficiency in each course serves as a gauge of their academic success. There are five main categories of learning outcomes: verbal information, intellectual skills, cognitive strategies, attitudes, and motor skills. Students' academic performance might be impacted by distractions from these learning objectives. On the other hand, academic performance is generally higher for married students who have a positive self-concept and a conflict-free home than for those who don't. However, the aims of academic excellence are undermined when these aspirations are tempered by familial problems. Placement, planning, and evaluation are the three main goals of academic performance assessment. In order to provide appropriate instruction and fulfill the three aforementioned goals, teachers and spouses should be aware of the spectrum of individual student performance.

Theoretically, Family dynamics, including roles, communication, styles, structures, and power dynamics, are the main focus. It implies that difficulties and non-problematic conduct stem from patterns of family connection (Priest, 2021). Everyone in the system is impacted by happenings at any level, and family functions are formed through ingrained behaviors. A society's social order is explained by Emile Durkheim's structural functionalism theory, which holds that different components work together to maintain stability and accomplish shared objectives (Fasina, 2021).

Levine (2010) stated that, family factors greatly impact achievement levels in academics. These researchers suggested that achievement in school is formed through marital experience in childhood. It is commonly believed that divorce has a negative impact on children's cognitive performance. Deficits of cognitive performance have been found when children in divorced or father-absent families are compared with children from intact families particularly in quantitative performance. For given observable parental characteristics, children with divorced or separated parents tend to perform less well at school than children living with their two parents. Bulduc, et al., (2012), stated that a child from a divorce family may face more difficulty than those in intact families, due to having to cope with a familial, emotional, or residential change. They specifically examined students that had experienced parental divorce while attending college. Of the 17 interviewed, only one-fourth reported their grades suffering due to the divorce. Like the work of Bulduc, Caron, & Logue (2012), Mulholland, Watt, Philpott, & Sarlin (2011), found that school performance of both girls and boys from divorced families tend to be inferior to that of children from non-divorced families. In contrast to these findings, Ross & Wynne (2010) found no clear difference between participants that had experienced divorce and those from intact families. For those having experienced parental divorce, academic standing is a clear variable to measure for college students.

Kamau (2013) investigated the relationship between family background and academic performance of secondary school students in Siakago Division, Mbeere North District, Kenya using a descriptive research design with a target population of 1,081 students in Siakago Division and 1,081 parents. The study used a sample of 338 students and parents which were selected by use of a proportionate stratified random sampling method. The study revealed that parental marital status, family size, parent's education level and family financial status had a positive relationship on academic performance of students. However,

the findings showed that while the marital status of the parents was not significant in explaining the academic performance of students, the type of family, either cohesive or conflictive had an effect in academic performance. The findings also showed that only 7% of students' academic performance would be explained by the parents' education level. The effects of marital crises can be detrimental to spouses, their kids, and society as a whole. Once delinquent youngsters from crisis-ridden homes grow up to become irresponsible adults, social vices and crimes may become commonplace. Emotional instability throughout adolescence can result in prostitution, robbery gangs, kidnappings, and assassination squads. Additionally, high school dropouts those who leave school without earning a diploma can happen. Graduation takes place at the conclusion of obligatory schooling in the US, Canada, Australia, the UK, and Scotland (Lamb et al. 2011).

Methodology

This study examined the effect of marital conflict on academic achievement in Lagos State's Alimosho LGA using a descriptive research methodology. Teenage pupils, teachers, and married couples made up the population. From ten local government junior secondary schools, 150 respondents were chosen at random. The impact of marital conflict factors on academic performance was measured using a scale. A preliminary study was conducted to collect data, and respondents were granted permission to fill out the questionnaires. Descriptive statistics, percentage distribution, frequencies, tables, and charts were used to analyse the data gathered.

Results

Table 1: Demographic Variables of Respondents

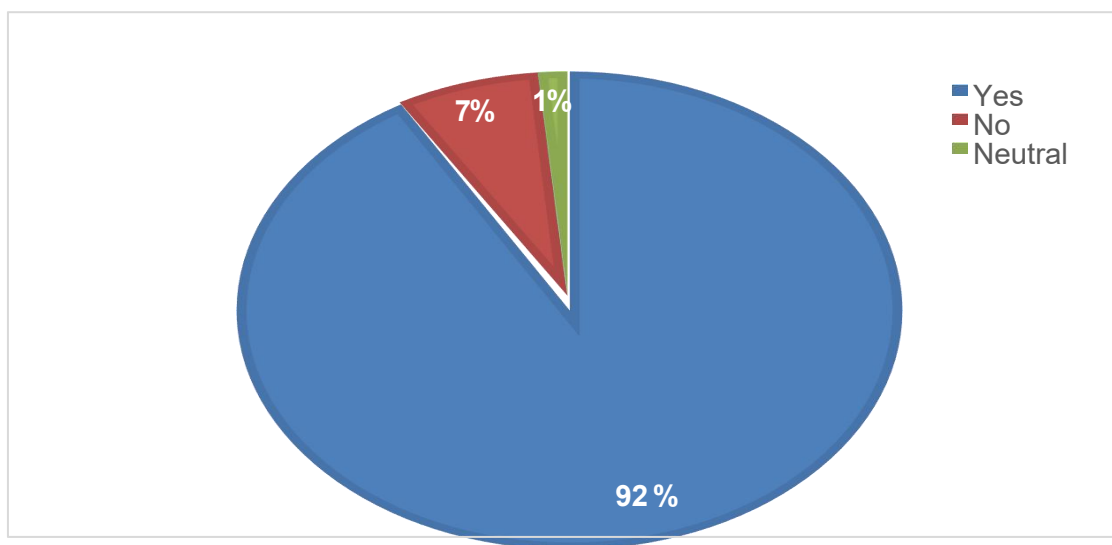
Source: Field Report, 2024

Gender of Respondents	Category	Percentage
	Male	53.5
	Female	46.5
Age	10-12 years	12.7
	13-14Years	38.7
	15-16 Years	45.8
	18 years and above	2.8
Ethnicity	Hausa/Fulani	35 (24.6%)
	Yoruba	57 (40.1%)
	Igbo	47 (33.1%)
	Idoma	1 (0.7%)
	Boki	1 (0.7%)
	Rivers	2 (1.4%)
	Others	4 (2.8%)
Educational Level	JSS1	23.9%
	JSS2	29.6%
	JSS3	45.1%
	NCE/First degree	1.4%

The respondents consisted more of males than females, with majority of them aged between 15 to 16 years of age (45.88). Yoruba dominated the ethnicity of the respondents, followed by Igbo and Hausa. Very few were Idoma and Boki. The study population is dominated by people who are in JSS3 (45.1%), followed by those in JSS 2 (29.6%), While those with NCE/first degree follow because the numbers of married couple and teacher interviewed are not much.

What is the Influence of Communication as a Marital Conflict Factor on Student's Academic Performance?

Figure 1: Impact of Communication as a Marital Conflict Factor in Alimosho LGA

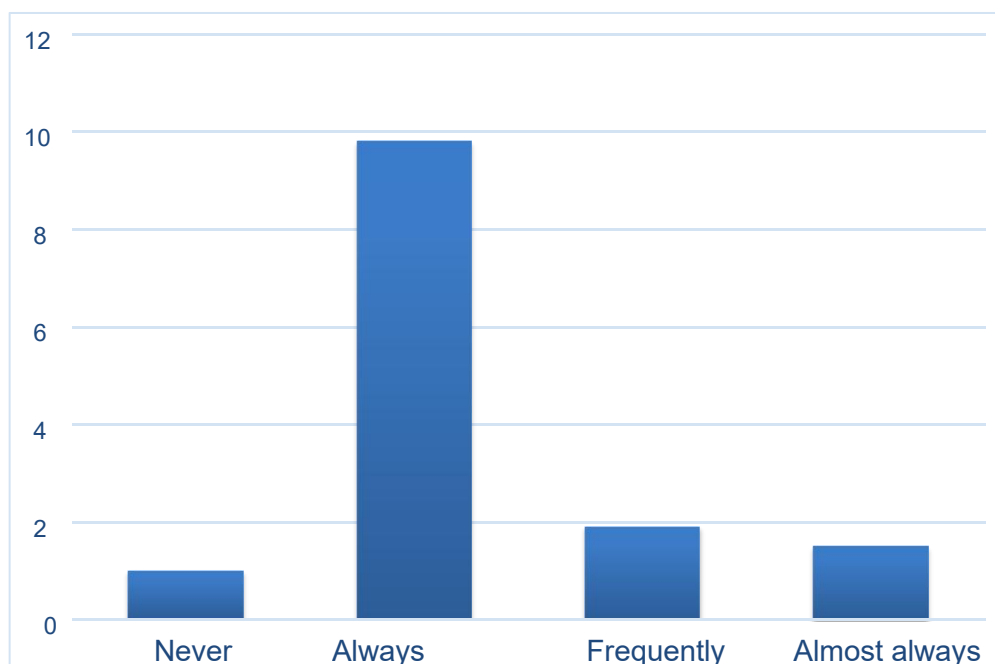


Source: Field Report, 2024

Overwhelmingly, 92% of the respondents confirmed that effective communication helps to improve academic performance of students irrespective of the school the student attend. Students who their parents have effective communication in their marriage helps to give them an edge and also helps in their development in academic performance at all levels in Alimosho LGA of Lagos State. The table also revealed the assertion of the respondents that Communication helps to improve the overall cognitive and affective performance of students in their studies. Only 7% denied such while were neutral. The result shows the inevitability of conflict between and among human beings irrespective of our ethnicity affiliation. The inevitability arises when individuals or groups interact and interest varies.

What is the Extent to Which Financial Challenges as a Marital Conflict Factor Affect Student's Academic Performance?

Figure 2:Impact of finance on students' academic



Source: Field Report, 2024

Despite the huge acknowledgment of the existence of marital conflict in most families in Alimosho LGA of Lagos State, 69% of the respondents agreed and asserted that financial is a key factor to the overall performance of students. Adequate finance also impacts students' performance in related examinations and also financial serves as a motivation for students towards learning. while 13% thought that financial challenges occur frequently despite their background. About 11% confessed that financial issues occurs almost always while 7% denied its existence.

Does Infidelity as a Marital Conflict Factor Affect Student's Academic Performance

Table 2: Impact of Infidelity as a Marital Conflict on Students' Performance

Variables	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Does infidelity as a marital conflict factor affect student's academic performance	56	40	10	19	17
Witnessing infidelity between my parents can lead to feelings of betrayal and trust issues, which can impact my ability to concentrate on my studies.	35	57	6	20	24
Children from families affected by infidelity may seek solace in external activities or relationships, potentially diverting their attention away from academics.	10	30	12	50	40
Students from families affected by infidelity may experience psychological distress, which can hinder their academic success.	102	20	1	7	12
Early marriage can lead to increased responsibilities and stress, which may negatively impact a student's academic performance.	121	12	2	5	2

Role Specification from parent as result of infidelity affect the learning process of students	12	30	7	56	37
Domestic Violence and Poor Mental Health of parents as a result of infidelity affect academic performance of students	104	26	3	7	5
Family Inference usually affects the academic performance of learning	22	46	12	22	40
Cultural Practices of parents usually affect student learning process	18	11	5	38	70

Source: Field Report, 2024

There was a need to understand the causes of marital conflict within families in Alimosho LGA of Lagos State. Out of the 142 respondents, 96 affirmed that disagreement as a result of infidelity between married couples, while 36 argued against that and 10 were neutral. The number of children overwhelmingly defines the family's marital conflict as a result of infidelity in families usually will affect their learning process because of fight and quarrel in the home. This standpoint was corroborated by 122 respondents who affirmed that infidelity issues lead to marital conflicts in families. This finding aligns with Ibukun and Ogunseye's (2018) assertion that infidelity and unfaithfulness relations and result in marital conflict. Infidelity, sexual satisfaction, domestic violence, and poor mental health are other major causes of marital conflict. While 131 respondents attributed the phenomenon to infidelity and sexual satisfaction, 130 argued that domestic violence and mental health are triggers of marital conflict. This finding corroborates the arguments of Akinyemi & Isiugo-Abanihe (2016) and Oyediran & Isiugo-Abanihe (2005) that physical, psychological and emotional abuse undermine marriages and healthy family lifestyles.

On the contrary, communication style, role specification and cultural practices had less impact on marital conflicts, domestic violence and financial issues. About 90 respondents failed to attribute marital conflict to communication style while 40 were affirmative and 12 were neutral. Similarly, 93 respondents disagreed on role specification as a causative factor to marital conflict while 108 respondents distanced cultural practices from the phenomena. These arguments are contrary to the findings of Adeoye & Jegede (2017) who argued that ineffective communication is precursor to marital conflict. While it can be argued that proper communication may lead to a breakdown in healthy marital relations, it does not necessarily lead to conflict especially when any of the partners understands the importance of managing high conflict personalities. Similarly, role specification is not a serious issue in Alimosho and Lagos in general as the metropolitan nature of the state compels spouses to assist each other in meeting up with family responsibilities. Therefore, it is accepted that the infidelity as a marital conflict factor play significant on student academic performance in school.

Table 3: The Impact of Early Marriage on Student's Academic Performance

Variables	Totally True (%)	True (%)	Partially True (%)	Partially Not True (%)	Not True (%)	Not True at All (%)
Students who marry early may face financial constraints that hinder their ability to pursue education and excel academically.	18.3	20.4	21.8	22.5	9.9	7
More likely to be disobedient	14.1	18.3	16.2	28.9	14.1	8.5
Exhibit anxiety about issues	18.3	22.5	17.6	22.5	13.4	5.7

Experience depression symptoms	17.6	23.2	18.3	23.9	7	9.9
Difficulty in developing good learning skills	10.6	19.7	21.1	32.4	11.3	4.9
Have low self-esteem	14.1	21.8	17.6	26.8	10.5	9.2
Poor communication pattern	26.1	14.2	13	9.2	16.7	21.8
Poor assimilation in class teachings	13.4	24.6	16.2	23.9	14.1	7.8
Exhibit empty mindedness	10.6	19.7	19.7	29.6	10.5	9.9
Exhibit a low level of concentration in class	15.5	24.6	11.5	27.5	9.6	11.3
Experience poor financial plan	12.7	14.1	16.2	23.2	21.1	12.7
Exhibit hostile behavior that negatively affects their learning process	12.7	23.9	17.6	26.1	11.3	8.5
Early marriage often results in a lack of maturity and life experience, which can affect a student's focus and commitment to their studies.	11.3	21.1	10.5	28.9	15.5	12.7
Level of trust with their spouse when they get married	14.1	25.4	15.5	25.4	7.6	12
Suspicious of their spouse when they get married	16.2	23.2	12	21.8	14.1	12.7
Early marriage often results in a lack of maturity and life experience, which can affect a student's focus and commitment to their studies.	12.7	19	17.6	23.2	12	15.5

Source: Field Report, 2024

In Alimosho LGA of Lagos State, early marriage in families causes aggressive conduct in students, which has an impact on their academic achievement. More than 60.5% of those surveyed think that early marriage affects their ability to learn and leads to aggressive behavior. Peers and classmates exhibit this behavior, particularly during social events and in schools. Additionally, according to 58.4% and 59.1% of respondents, respectively, students struggle with anxiety and sadness. These pupils frequently act aggressively because they are afraid of the unknown. The findings also align with Amato & Cheadle (2008) and Cummings & Davies (2010) reports on the effects of marital conflicts on the societal interactions and emotional security of the student academic performance. The authors argue that students at early stage of learning exposed to marital conflict are exposed to negative social interactions and aggression. Klaus, Miczek, de Almedia, Kravitz, Rissman, de Boer and Rain (2007) referred to aggression as a manifestation of anxiety. Aggressive conduct may be a coping mechanism for insecurity, because anxiety and aggression are related. Serious marital disputes, however, might not always result in disobedience. These families may have issues with their children's IQ, self-esteem, and ability to sustain positive relationships. The information was confirmed by 51.3% of the responders. According to 53.3% of the respondents, low self-esteem impedes the development of learning skills (51.4%), assimilation (54.2%), and academic achievement (51.6%). A sizable portion of respondents say they have trouble focusing in class. All things considered, these problems may have a

detrimental effect on the academic success of students. The findings support the assertions by Adebayo & Olaoye (2012) and Harold & Sellers (2018) that marital conflict leads to low grades and educational attainment in student academic performance.

Marital conflict negatively impacts the student academic performance and social interactions. About 53.3% of the respondents affirmed that such conflicts make the student exhibit social withdrawal as argued by Cummings & Davies (2010). They develop communication patterns that reflect aggression and reactivity with peers in class. They tend to be withdrawn in the classrooms especially when they are less expressive of their emotions. When grown, they exhibit hostile behaviour that negatively affects their own marital relationships as confirmed by 54.2% of the respondents. They fail to trust their spouses when married and are always suspicious of their activities. However, the girl child tends to be patient when handling relationship issues in the bid to toe a different path from their parents. About 50.7% of the respondents attested to the fact that the girl child is patient enough to manage their relationship issues.

Management of Marital Conflict and its Effects on Students' Academic Performance

Marital conflict and its effects on the student academic performance have been tackled from different dimensions by public and private institutions. Table 5 discusses the actors involved and their strategies in the management of the phenomenon.

Table 4: Management of the Effects of Marital Conflict on the Girl Child

Variables	Totally True (%)	True (%)	Partially True (%)	Partially Not True (%)	Not True (%)	Not True At All (%)
Government organizes seminars to combat marital conflict and its effects on the student academic performance	7.3	15.2	31.8	10.5	21.9	13.3
Government conducts researches on marital conflict and apply results to minimize effects on the students	10.1	18.3	14.2	18.2	24.1	15.1
Government has institution (s), Guidance and Counselling units in public institutions to combat marital conflict and its effects	33.2	22.9	18.3	5.6	13	7
families have counselling units to solve marital issues and their effects on the student academic performance	12.6	38.5	31.1	9.1	4.4	4.3
schools operate counselling and guardian for students from marital conflict homes	23.5	21.8	15.6	16.4	12.7	10
Marriage counsellors to organize mentorship sessions for victims of marital conflicts	34.1	22.2	18	10.2	5.7	9.8
Schools organize regular programs that educate parents on marital issues on student academic performance	34.4	22.4	16.2	9.9	13.1	4

CSOs and NGOs organize advocacy campaigns against marital conflict and implications on the academic performance through radio and television programs	11.5	14.7	20.2	20.6	25.5	7.5
CSOs and NGOs engage in Human rights activism to curb marital conflict and its effects on the academic performance of students	20.5	20.3	9.5	26.5	18.6	4.6

Source: Field Report, 2024

Results from Table 5 shows that the government organizes seminars to combat marital conflict and its effects on the girl child. The affirmation came from 54.3% of the respondents who agreed that the residents of Lagos State and Ikeja LGA in particular have benefited from seminars and conferences on the issue by public and private institutions, including schools and hospitals. During the seminars, parents were made to come in terms with the implications of parental conflict on their children and urged to report cases of such to the relevant authorities. However, 57.4% of the respondents disagreed that the government conducts research on marital conflict and applies results to minimize effects on the girl child. The negativity around government involvement is contrary to the assertion by Aghatise (2012) that public institutions create awareness and educate the general public on healthy relationships, management strategies and support services. Rather, the government has Guidance and Counselling units in public institutions that help victims of marital conflict, including the girl child, overcome its effects. The presence of such units in Ikeja LGA was acknowledged by 74.4% of the respondents.

Counseling spouses against marital conflict is not an exclusive responsibility of the government. Churches play vital roles in the fight and engage in counseling services to mitigate its effects on the girl child. About 82.2% of the respondents attested to the involvement of churches in counseling services. Many churches have Service Units where people are supported and counseled on different issues. Dedicated members are most times paired with vulnerable persons and mandated to monitor their progress. Churches also engage in welfare services and prayer intercessions as affirmed by 60.9% and 74.3% of the respondents respectively. Findings on the involvement of public institutions and the church in the fight against marital conflict align with the studies of Okechukwu (2014), Ajayi & Asaleye (2018), Oni & Odukoya (2015) and Omololu (2017) who argued in favour of the involvement of public institutions and the church in the fight against marital conflict. While the government and the school have been more involved in mitigating the effects of marital conflict, Civil Society Organisation (CSOs) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have contributed in different ways, including the provision of a network of assistance, advocacy campaigns, relationship counselling and human right activism. They organize awareness programs on the protection of the rights and privileges of the student academic performance during the International Day.

Discussion of Findings

Given that human existence involves strife, families in Lagos' Alimosho LGA were not exempt. Just 7% of those surveyed denied that marital conflict occurs in these kinds of households. These disputes, however, were irregular and were primarily brought on by arguments about money, family meddling, adultery, and domestic violence. Cultural customs, role expectations, and communication methods have minimal effect on marital disputes. Because

some cultural traditions were incorporated into religious rituals and viewed as a part of life, they had less of an influence. Most Christian families in Alimosho LGA, Nigeria view weddings as divine privileges that should provide fruit. Fecundity is linked to such fruitfulness. The expectation that children's scholastic demands be neglected strains marriages and often divides nuclear families. Apart from problems with fertility, marital conflict is caused by things that have gotten worse with time. According to Vandewater and Lansford (1998), marital problems have gotten so bad that pride, stubbornness, anger, hurt, and bitterness make it difficult to communicate effectively. However, if the partners receive counseling shortly after the wedding, a complete breakdown can be prevented (Amato, 2019). For the girl child, marital dissolutions brought on by incompatibility, mistrust, childlessness, and family meddling can have major repercussions. Children who are affected frequently experience maltreatment, have limited access to school, and may be coerced into trafficking, early marriages, roadside hawking, or sexual abuse. Some, who come from a Christian family, are genitally altered to fit their parents' preferences. Both governmental and non-governmental organizations are involved in resolving marital disputes. To combat domestic abuse and assist victims of school dropouts, the Lagos State Government established the Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency and the Citizen's Mediation Center. While non-governmental organizations increase awareness about students' rights and academic achievement, schools also offer victims counseling and mentorship.

Conclusion

The study believed that parental conflict affects junior high school pupils' academic achievement Lagos State's Alimosho LGA. It also highlights the necessity of preventing marital strife, due to its effect on child's social, emotional, and psychological growth. The study asserted that, marital conflict can lead to adult relational problems, depression, aggressive behavior, and subpar academic achievement. The research maintained that, marital discord significantly affects children's educational progress in public junior secondary schools within the study area.

Relatedly, the investigation concluded that, development of financial and communication skills should receive a lot of parental attention. In practice, this implies that parents should often update their children on their intentions and aspirations, their accomplishments, and their own status. It added that, parents should also help and encourage their kids to become more knowledgeable and creative in their profession, and they should appropriately assess and reward their children's accomplishments with cash rewards, public acclaim, and other forms of recognition. The study further believed in comprehensive support systems that include communities, schools, and parents can be put in place to lessen the negative impacts of marital disputes on students' academic performance and to foster a more positive learning environment.

Recommendations

- i. Provide family therapy in schools to help parents communicate better and lessen conflict at home, as well as to assist kids who are impacted by marital disputes.
- ii. Encourage parents to participate in workshops on effective communication, stress management, and dispute resolution.
- iii. Create peer support and mentorship programs to help students deal with the psychological effects of marital disputes.
- iv. Put in place community initiatives that tackle the underlying reasons of marital discord, like financial strain and adultery, and offer tools for family assistance.

- v. To learn more about the many circumstances of marital conflict and how it affects students' performance and well-being, further research should be done on the subject.

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