

Impact of Marital Conflict on the Academic Performance of Public Secondary School Students in the Jalingo Educational Zone of Taraba State, Nigeria.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2026.1304000078>

Received: 10 March 2026; Accepted: 09 April 2026; Published: 01 May 2026

ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of marital conflict on the academic performance of public secondary school students in the Jalingo educational zone of Taraba State, Nigeria. Recognizing the critical role of family stability in fostering positive relationships and educational outcomes, the research is anchored in Karl Marx's Conflict Theory. A non-probability convenience sampling technique was employed to select 200 respondents comprising 40 students each from five purposively selected secondary schools drawn from the SS1 and SS2 student population. Data were collected using a structured instrument titled Marital Conflict and Students' Academic Achievement Questionnaire (MCSAAQ). Analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), applying descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) and Chi-Square tests to evaluate the hypotheses. Descriptive findings indicated that respondents generally agreed (mean scores above the 2.5 criterion) that emotional instability of parents, inadequate financial support, interference from extended family members, and spousal battering were influential factors affecting students' academic performance. However, inferential analysis using the Chi-Square test revealed that none of these variables had a statistically significant effect on academic performance at the 0.05 alpha level. The study concludes that marital conflict does not exert a statistically significant influence on students' academic achievement within the Jalingo educational zone. It recommends further investigation into alternative factors that may contribute to students' academic outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

The family is universally recognized as the cornerstone of social stability and child development. A harmonious family environment provides emotional security, economic support, and consistent parental guidance, all of which are essential for children's academic success. However, marital conflict manifested through persistent disagreements, separation, or divorce has increasingly disrupted family stability in many societies, including Nigeria.

Emotional instability arising from marital conflict often undermines children's psychological wellbeing. Studies show that children exposed to frequent parental quarrels or separation experience heightened stress, reduced concentration, and diminished motivation for learning, which negatively impacts their academic performance (Onyela, Adams & Duchi, 2025). Emotional insecurity in the home environment translates into poor classroom adjustment and lower achievement levels.

Economic deprivation is another consequence of marital conflict. When families experience breakdown, financial resources are often strained due to single-parent responsibilities or disrupted household income. This economic instability limits children's access to educational materials, proper nutrition, and supportive learning environments, thereby reducing their academic attainment (Owobamigbe, 2024).

Equally critical is the loss of parental upbringing. Marital disharmony frequently results in weakened parental monitoring and guidance. Children from unstable homes may lack consistent discipline, encouragement, and

moral support, which are vital for academic adjustment. Without strong parental involvement, students are more likely to engage in maladaptive behaviours such as absenteeism, poor study habits, and declining academic performance (Chukwu, 2025).

Finally, the anxiety associated with marital breakdown exerts a profound influence on students' learning outcomes. The fear of family separation, coupled with uncertainty about the future, often leads to emotional distress and reduced cognitive functioning. Anxiety interferes with concentration, memory, and problem-solving skills, thereby lowering academic achievement (Onyela et al., 2025).

In Nigeria, where family structures are undergoing rapid social changes, the incidence of marital instability has become a pressing concern. Schools are increasingly burdened with responsibilities traditionally held by families, highlighting the urgent need to understand how marital conflict affects students' academic performance. This study therefore investigates the impact of marital conflict on secondary school students in Jalingo educational zone of Taraba State, Nigeria, with particular attention to emotional instability, economic deprivation, loss of parental upbringing, and anxiety of marital breakdown.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to determine the effect of marital conflict on the academic performance of selected public secondary school students in Jalingo educational zone of Taraba State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine the extent to which emotional instability influences academic performance among public secondary school students in Jalingo educational zone.
2. Identify the extent to which economic deprivation resulting from marital conflict affects students' academic performance in the study area.
3. Determine the extent to which loss of parental upbringing due to marital conflict influences students' academic performance in Jalingo educational zone.
4. Assess the extent to which anxiety arising from marital breakdown influences students' academic performance in selected public secondary schools in Jalingo educational zone.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions, formulated to direct data collection, literature review, and analysis:

1. To what extent does emotional instability arising from marital conflict influence the academic performance of students in public secondary schools within Jalingo educational zone?
2. To what extent does economic deprivation associated with marital conflict affect the academic performance of students in Jalingo educational zone?
3. To what extent does the loss of parental upbringing resulting from marital conflict influence students' academic performance in Jalingo educational zone?
4. To what extent does anxiety caused by marital breakdown affect the academic performance of students in selected public secondary schools in Jalingo educational zone?

Statement of Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

H₀₁: Emotional instability resulting from marital conflict does not significantly affect the academic performance of students in selected public secondary schools in Jalingo educational zone.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between economic deprivation due to marital conflict and the academic performance of students in Jalingo educational zone.

H₀₃: Loss of parental upbringing resulting from marital conflict does not significantly influence the academic performance of students in Jalingo educational zone.

H₀₄: There is no significant relationship between students' anxiety arising from marital breakdown and their academic performance in selected public secondary schools in Jalingo educational zone.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Historical Perspectives on Marital Conflict

The family has long been recognized as a fundamental institution that shapes children's development and life outcomes. Early scholarly works emphasized the marital relationship as the foundation of family cohesion and stability (Erel & Burman, 1995). Initial research focused primarily on the effects of divorce; however, subsequent empirical evidence revealed that marital conflict itself whether in intact or separated families—has a more profound impact on children's outcomes than divorce alone (Amato & Keith, 1991; Clarke-Stewart et al., 2000).

Studies from this period consistently demonstrated that children exposed to persistent marital discord are at a heightened risk of emotional maladjustment, anxiety, and poor academic performance. Even in non-clinical populations, marital conflict significantly predicted behavioural problems and psychopathology among children (Block et al., 1986; Fincham & Osborne, 1993). These foundational studies established marital conflict as a critical variable in understanding child development and academic outcomes.

Contemporary Perspectives on Marital Conflict and Educational Outcomes

Recent studies, both within Nigeria and internationally, have reaffirmed and extended earlier findings by highlighting the complex ways in which marital conflict affects children's academic achievement. Contemporary research emphasizes not only the presence of conflict but also its frequency, intensity, and resolution patterns as key determinants of child outcomes.

In the Nigerian context, Chukwu (2025) found that marital instability significantly contributes to depression, emotional distress, and poor academic performance among university students in Rivers State. Similarly, Onyela et al. (2025) reported that emotional insecurity, economic hardship, and parental neglect associated with marital conflict negatively affect learning outcomes among junior secondary school students in Lagos State. Owobamigbe (2024) further demonstrated that marital conflict significantly predicts maladaptive behaviours and reduced academic achievement among secondary school students in Edo State.

Internationally, studies provide additional empirical support. Research conducted in the United States and Europe indicates that exposure to chronic interparental conflict is associated with reduced academic engagement, lower academic achievement, and increased absenteeism (Harold & Sellers, 2018; McCoy et al., 2013). Longitudinal evidence further suggests that children raised in high-conflict family environments often experience cognitive disruptions and difficulties in concentration, which adversely affect their academic performance (Cummings & Davies, 2010).

Collectively, these findings suggest that marital conflict operates through multiple pathways, including emotional instability, economic deprivation, inconsistent parenting, and heightened anxiety. These factors significantly undermine students' motivation, psychological adjustment, and overall academic success.

Conceptualizing Marital Conflict

Marital conflict has been conceptualized in various ways in the literature. It is commonly defined as a disagreement or clash of interests between partners (Donald, 2000), the arousal of competing motives (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.), or a condition involving opposing drives that generate tension within the marital relationship (Evelyn, 1971).

Scholars differ in their interpretations of marital conflict. Some argue that conflict can be constructive when effectively managed. For instance, Eisenma (1990) posited that conflict provides opportunities for growth, negotiation, and the redefinition of shared goals within marriage. Similarly, Munroe and Levy (1980) suggested that the absence of conflict may indicate emotional disengagement rather than relational harmony.

However, contemporary scholarship largely emphasizes the negative consequences of unresolved marital conflict, particularly for children. Empirical evidence consistently links such conflict to emotional distress, financial instability, weakened parental supervision, and increased anxiety, all of which contribute to poor academic performance (Onyela et al., 2025; Owobamigbe, 2024).

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical frameworks provide a structured basis for understanding and interpreting social phenomena. They guide the analysis of relationships among variables and situate research findings within established bodies of knowledge (Abend, 2008). This study is anchored on Karl Marx’s Conflict Theory, which provides a relevant lens for examining marital conflict and its implications for children’s academic outcomes.

Karl Marx’s Conflict Theory

Conflict Theory, developed by Karl Marx (1818–1883), explains social life in terms of competition, inequality, and the struggle for resources. In *Das Kapital* (1867), Marx argued that conflict arises from disparities in material conditions, power relations, and competing interests within society.

Applied to family dynamics, this theory suggests that marital conflict may emerge from differences in socio-economic status, expectations, roles, and values between partners. Such conflicts can destabilize the family structure and create an environment characterized by tension and insecurity.

Although conflict may sometimes serve as a catalyst for positive change, persistent and unresolved conflict within the family often leads to dysfunction. In this study, marital conflict is therefore viewed as a destabilizing factor that negatively affects children’s emotional well-being and academic performance (Chukwu, 2025; Onyela et al., 2025).

Conceptual Framework

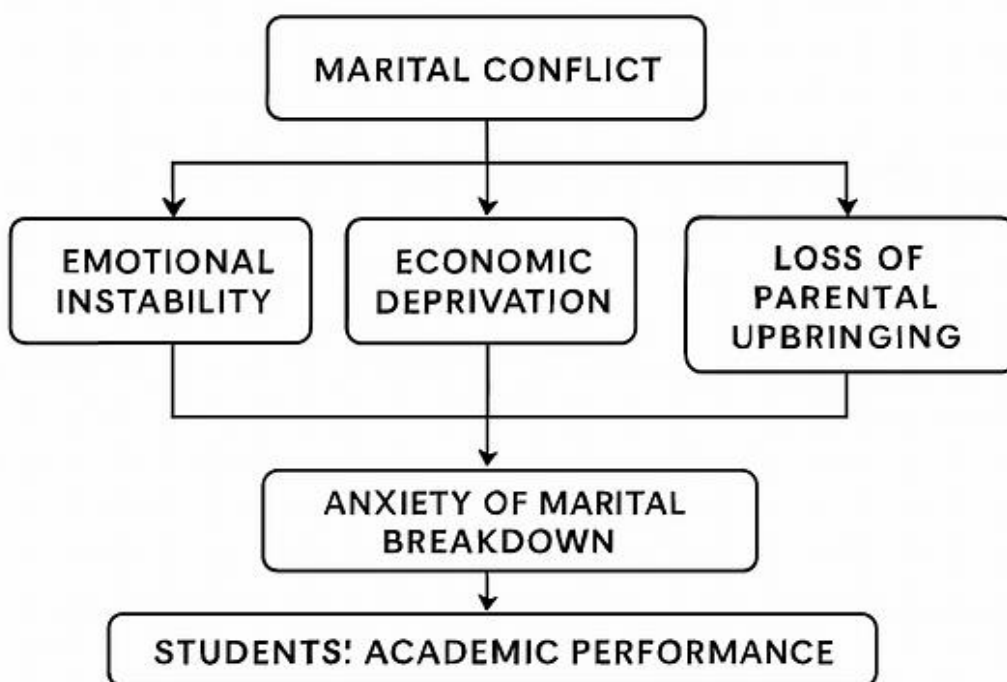


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

This framework illustrates the relationship between marital conflict and students' academic performance. Marital conflict is shown to influence four key variables: emotional instability, economic deprivation, loss of parental upbringing, and anxiety of marital breakdown. Each of these factors contributes to students' academic outcomes, including motivation, adjustment, achievement, attendance, and behaviour. The framework emphasizes how disruptions in family stability can cascade into educational challenges for secondary school students, particularly in the Jalingo educational zone of Taraba State, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The choice of research design was guided by the nature and objectives of the study. This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the effect of marital conflict on students' academic performance in selected secondary schools within Jalingo Educational Zone, Taraba State. The survey design was considered appropriate because it enables the systematic collection of data from a large population and facilitates the analysis of relationships among variables without manipulating them. It is particularly suitable for studies involving attitudes, perceptions, and behavioural outcomes within natural settings.

Population of the Study

The target population comprised all students in public secondary schools within Jalingo Educational Zone. According to records from the Taraba State Ministry of Education (2016), the zone has a total student population of 21,084 across public and private secondary schools. However, the accessible population for this study consisted of 5,048 students in SS1 and SS2 classes in public secondary schools. These categories of students were considered appropriate because they are academically stable and capable of providing reliable responses.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

A sample is a representative subset of a population selected for the purpose of a study (Ndagi, 1984). For this study, a total of 200 students were selected from five secondary schools: GDSS Kofai, GDSS Iware, GDSS Nukkai, FGGC Jalingo, and GDSS Sunkani.

The study employed a multi-stage sampling approach combining convenience and simple random sampling techniques. At the first stage, schools were selected using convenience sampling due to accessibility, administrative approval, and logistical considerations. Although this limits the generalisability of the findings, efforts were made to include schools from different locations within the educational zone to enhance variability and representation.

At the second stage, simple random sampling was used to select 40 students from each school (SS1 and SS2), ensuring that every student within the selected schools had an equal chance of participation. This combination of techniques helped to balance practicality with elements of representativeness.

Research Instrument

The primary instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled Marital Conflict and Students' Academic Achievement Questionnaire (MCSAAQ). The instrument was designed based on the study objectives and consisted of items measuring four key dimensions of marital conflict: emotional instability, economic deprivation, loss of parental upbringing, and anxiety related to marital breakdown.

Measurement of Academic Performance

To enhance the validity of the study, academic performance was measured using both self-reported academic indicators and objective academic data. Students were asked to report their recent examination scores, which were further verified through available school academic records where accessible. This dual approach reduced reliance on perception alone and improved the accuracy and credibility of the measurement.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Content and face validity of the instrument were established through expert review by three specialists from the Faculty of Education, Taraba State University. Their suggestions led to modifications that improved clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives.

The reliability of the instrument was determined through a pilot study conducted outside the sampled schools. The data obtained were analyzed using Cronbach’s Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.82, which indicates a high level of internal consistency and reliability of the instrument.

Procedure for Data Collection

An introductory letter from the Head of Department, Counselling, Educational Psychology and Human Development, Faculty of Education, Taraba State University, was presented to the principals of the selected schools to obtain permission for the study. The researcher, with the assistance of trained research aides, administered the questionnaires directly to the respondents. This approach ensured proper guidance, a high response rate, and accuracy in data collection. Ethical considerations such as confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were strictly observed.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize and describe the data.

Inferential statistics were employed to test the hypotheses. Specifically, the Chi-Square (χ^2) test of independence was used to examine the relationship between marital conflict variables and students’ academic performance. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

Decisions on statistical significance were based strictly on p-values:

- i. $p < 0.05$: statistically significant relationship (reject null hypothesis)
- ii. $p > 0.05$: no statistically significant relationship (fail to reject null hypothesis)

To ensure accuracy, all statistical interpretations were aligned with the computed p-values and Chi-Square results.

RESULTS

Research Question 1

What is the influence of parents' emotional instability on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Jalingo Education Zone, Taraba State?

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on the Influence of Parents' Emotional Instability on Students' Academic Performance

| S/No. | Statements | Mean (X) | SD | Remarks |
|-------|---|----------|------|---------|
| 1. | Marital instability stimulates negative attitude to effective Student's academic performance. | 3.13 | 1.13 | INF |
| 2. | Disagreement between husband and wife is a strong negative pointer to student learning. | 2.94 | 1.06 | INF |
| 3. | Children from separated families are psychologically stressed in class compared to their counterparts from stable families. | 3.05 | 1.05 | INF |

| | | | | |
|-----|---|-------------|-------------|------------|
| 4. | Student's interest in academics could be discouraged as a result of constant parental conflict in their home. | 2.98 | 1.02 | INF |
| 5. | Marital instability may lead to constant absent moodiness of a child in class. | 2.98 | 1.06 | INF |
| 6. | A student raised by grumbling/complaining parent reduces his enthusiasm for learning. | 2.99 | 1.03 | INF |
| 7. | Ineffective attention by parent on the student study make them likely to have below average grade. | 2.97 | 1.07 | INF |
| 8. | Dispute in the home result into child feelings of moodiness to study. | 3.00 | 1.00 | INF |
| 9. | Hostility in the home lead student to resist learning in school. | 2.99 | 1.04 | INF |
| 10. | Victims of marital conflict do not take learning serious. | 2.73 | 1.09 | INF |
| | Group Mean/SD | 2.98 | 1.06 | INF |

Field Report 2019 Criterion Mean: $\overline{X} \geq 2.50 \Rightarrow \text{INF (presence of influence)}$

The results presented in Table 1 show the mean and standard deviation of respondents' ratings on the influence of parents' emotional instability on students' academic performance.

All ten items recorded mean scores ranging from 2.73 to 3.13, which are above the criterion mean of 2.50. This indicates that respondents generally agreed that various dimensions of parental emotional instability such as marital conflict, hostility, separation, and ineffective parental attention have an influence on students' academic performance.

The group mean of 2.98 further supports this pattern, suggesting an overall agreement among respondents regarding the presence of this influence. The standard deviation of 1.06 indicates a moderate spread of responses, implying some variability in opinions, though not excessively wide.

Importantly, while the descriptive statistics (mean scores) indicate perceived influence, they do not establish statistical significance or causal relationships. Therefore, these findings should be interpreted as respondents' perceptions, which will be further examined using inferential statistics in subsequent sections.

RESULTS

Research Question 2

What is the influence of inadequacy of financial support on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Jalingo Education Zone, Taraba State?

Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on the Influence of Inadequacy of Financial Support on Students' Academic Performance

| S/No. | Statements | Mean (X) | SD | Remarks |
|-------|--|----------|------|---------|
| 11. | Student experience financial difficulties when parents are in disagreement. | 3.01 | 1.15 | INF |
| 12. | Low incomes earnings result in inadequate for effective learning processes. | 2.98 | 1.11 | INF |
| 13. | Inadequate funds impede the purchase of students' educational materials. | 2.90 | 1.00 | INF |
| 14. | Parent with constant marital conflict think that is a waste to educate their children. | 2.95 | 1.06 | INF |
| 15. | Student study interest will be affected if he/she lacks the ability to obtain constructional learning materials. | 2.99 | 1.0 | INF |
| 16. | Students who are raised by conflict ridden home are at risk of getting their basic needs. | 3.03 | .97 | INF |

| | | | | |
|-----|--|-------------|-------------|------------|
| 17. | Students feel discouraged to go to school when they see their friends wearing new uniforms. | 2.99 | 1.01 | INF |
| 18. | Ability to obtain balance diet can influence student academic performance. | 2.94 | 1.05 | INF |
| 19. | Students feel discouraged to go to school without good meal from their home. | 2.93 | 1.02 | INF |
| 20. | If should have improved income I would purchase my necessary text book to improve my academic performance's. | 2.94 | 1.08 | INF |
| | Group Mean/SD | 2.97 | 1.05 | INF |

Field Report 2019 Criterion Mean: $\overline{X} \geq 2.50 \Rightarrow \text{INF (presence of influence)}$; $\overline{X} \leq 2.50 \Rightarrow \text{LE (lack of influence)}$

The data presented in Table 2 show the mean and standard deviation of respondents' ratings on the influence of inadequacy of financial support on students' academic performance.

The mean scores for all items range from 2.90 to 3.03, which are above the criterion mean of 2.50. This indicates that respondents generally agreed that financial constraints such as inability to purchase educational materials, poor nutrition, inadequate income, and lack of basic school needs are perceived to influence students' academic performance.

The group mean of 2.97 further suggests an overall agreement among respondents regarding the presence of this influence. The standard deviation of 1.05 indicates a moderate dispersion of responses, suggesting that while opinions vary slightly, they are not widely scattered.

It is important to note that these findings are based on descriptive statistics and reflect respondents' perceptions. They do not establish statistical significance or causal relationships. Further verification using inferential statistical analysis is required to determine whether the observed influence is statistically significant.

Research Question 3

What is the influence of interference of close relations on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Jalingo Education Zone, Taraba State?

Table 3. Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on the Influence of Interference of Close Relations on Students' Academic Performance

| S/No. | Statements | Mean (X) | SD | Remarks |
|-------|--|----------|------|---------|
| 21. | Good upbringing improves student's academic performance in school. | 3.06 | 1.06 | INF |
| 22. | Certainly, academic performance is not related to child home training. | 2.57 | 1.08 | INF |
| 23. | Student that come from a family that has good character training could have poor academic performance in school. | 2.93 | 1.04 | INF |
| 24. | Students that come from poor upbringing home have less confidence in learning than others. | 2.93 | 1.01 | INF |
| 25. | Marital crisis is a major factor that could lead to delinquent behaviours by the students in school. | 2.97 | 1.06 | INF |
| 26. | Decrease in study interest is associated with poor child care due to marital conflict. | 2.88 | 1.02 | INF |
| 27. | Students, who are not morally sound because of crisis in the family, more often develop poor study motivation in school. | 2.88 | 1.11 | INF |
| 28. | Spouses who are always in disagreements within their homes might develop in the child a negative self-image to study harder in school. | 2.89 | 1.09 | INF |
| 29. | Parental conflict could stimulate in their children bad academic attitude. | 2.96 | .98 | INF |

| | | | | |
|----------------------|---|-------------|-------------|------------|
| 30. | Marital conflict nurtured lack of commitment to monitor for the consistent development of good moral/values of the students' performance. | 2.97 | 1.06 | INF |
| Group Mean/SD | | 2.90 | 1.07 | INF |

Source: Field Report 2019 Criterion Mean: $\overline{X} \geq 2.50 \Rightarrow \text{INF (presence of influence)}$; $\overline{X} \leq 2.50 \Rightarrow \text{LE (lack of influence)}$

The results presented in Table 3 show the mean and standard deviation of respondents' ratings on the influence of interference of close relations on students' academic performance.

The mean scores for the items range from 2.57 to 3.06, all of which are above the criterion mean of 2.50. This suggests that respondents generally agreed that factors related to family environment and interference from close relations such as poor upbringing, marital conflict, inadequate child care, and negative moral influence are perceived to influence students' academic performance.

The group mean of 2.90 indicates an overall agreement among respondents regarding the presence of this influence. The standard deviation of 1.07 reflects a moderate spread of responses, suggesting some variation in respondents' opinions, though not widely dispersed.

However, it is important to note that some items (e.g., statements suggesting that academic performance is not related to home training or that well-trained children may still perform poorly) reflect mixed or contradictory perceptions. This indicates that while the general trend supports the influence of close relations, respondents do not hold entirely uniform views on all aspects of the relationship.

As with previous results, these findings are based on descriptive statistics and represent respondents' perceptions. They do not imply statistical significance or causal relationships. Further analysis using inferential statistics is required to determine the significance of these relationships.

Research Question 4

What is the influence of spousal battering on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Jalingo Education Zone, Taraba State?

Table 4. Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on the Influence of Spousal Battering on Students' Academic Performance

| S/No. | Statements | Mean (X) | SD | Remarks |
|-------|--|----------|------|---------|
| 31. | Impatience within the home subdue learning ability in the student academic performance in school. | 3.02 | 1.06 | INF |
| 32. | School Phobia as a result of interruption in marriage hinders a successful understanding of learning. | 2.94 | 1.0 | INF |
| 33. | A traumatize marriage will discourage conducive learning environment for better student academic performance. | 2.99 | .99 | INF |
| 34. | worries among parents at home influence student academic performance in school. | 2.97 | 1.04 | INF |
| 35. | Students with strong feelings of frustration as a result of dispute in the home displays negative attitude to their studies. | 2.94 | 1.04 | INF |
| 36. | Marital conflict produces lack of psychological wellbeing on students which results in poor academic performance. | 2.91 | 1.0 | INF |
| 37. | Worries releases a negative self-image/self-concept which could decrease students' academic performance in the school. | 2.91 | 1.05 | INF |
| 38. | Fear produces low self-esteem that could associate with poor study habit of the students. | 2.95 | 1.03 | INF |

| | | | | |
|-------------------|---|-------------|-------------|------------|
| 39. | Dispute in the home result into child feelings of moodiness that distract active learning attention in the school. | 2.96 | 1.01 | INF |
| 40. | Emotional distress as a result of marital disagreement between the spouse lead to ineffective concentration of the student in school. | 2.87 | 1.12 | INF |
| Group Mean | | 2.95 | 1.04 | INF |

Criterion Mean: $\overline{X} \geq 2.50 \Rightarrow \text{INF (presence of influence)}$; $\overline{X} \leq 2.50 \Rightarrow \text{LE (lack of influence)}$

The data presented in Table 4 show the mean and standard deviation of respondents’ ratings on the influence of spousal battering on students’ academic performance.

The mean scores for the items range from 2.87 to 3.02, all of which are above the criterion mean of 2.50. This suggests that respondents generally agreed that experiences associated with spousal battering such as emotional distress, fear, anxiety, poor psychological well-being, and disrupted home environments are perceived to influence students’ academic performance.

The group mean of 2.95 indicates an overall agreement among respondents regarding the presence of this influence. The standard deviation of 1.04 reflects a moderate spread of responses, suggesting some variability in opinions, though responses are not widely dispersed.

However, it is important to note that several items in this table refer broadly to marital conflict and emotional distress, rather than explicitly to spousal battering. This conceptual overlap may affect the precision with which the construct of spousal battering is measured and interpreted.

As with previous findings, these results are based on descriptive statistics and reflect respondents’ perceptions. They do not establish statistical significance or causal relationships. Further analysis using inferential statistics is necessary to determine whether the observed relationships are statistically significant.

Hypothesis 1

Parents' emotional instability has no significant influence on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Jalingo Education Zone, Taraba State.

Table 5. Chi-Square Test Statistic on the Influence of Parents' Emotional Instability on Students' Academic Performance

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 29.486 ^a | 29 | .440 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 30.552 | 29 | .387 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 1.762 | 1 | .184 |
| N of Valid Cases | 545 | | |

Note: df = degree of freedom

N = Number

Asump. Sig. = Asymptotic Significance

P>0.05 insignificant

The results presented in Table 5 show the Chi-square test of the influence of parents’ emotional instability on students’ academic performance.

The Pearson Chi-square value is $\chi^2(29) = 29.486$ with an associated p-value of 0.440. Since the p-value is greater than the 0.05 level of significance, the result is not statistically significant.

Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected (retained). This indicates that there is no statistically significant influence of parents’ emotional instability on students’ academic performance in public secondary schools in Jalingo Education Zone, Taraba State.

Although the descriptive results (mean scores) suggested a perceived influence, the Chi-square analysis shows that this influence is not statistically significant. This implies that the observed relationship may be due to chance rather than a strong or consistent effect.

Hypothesis 2

Inadequate financial support from parents has no significant influence on students’ academic performance in public secondary schools in Jalingo Education Zone, Taraba State.

Table 6. Chi-Square Test Statistic on the Influence of Inadequate Financial Support on Students’ Academic Performance

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) |
|------------------------------|--------|----|-----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 40.139 | 30 | .102 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 30.552 | 30 | .052 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 1.989 | 1 | .158 |
| N of Valid Cases | 545 | | |

Note: df = degree of freedom

N = Number

Asump. Sig. = Asymptotic Significance

P>0.05 Insignificant

The results presented in Table 6 show the Chi-square test of the influence of inadequate financial support from parents on students’ academic performance.

The Pearson Chi-square value is $\chi^2(30) = 40.139$ with an associated p-value of 0.102. Since the p-value is greater than the 0.05 level of significance, the result is not statistically significant.

Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected (retained). This indicates that there is no statistically significant influence of inadequate financial support from parents on students’ academic performance in public secondary schools in Jalingo Education Zone, Taraba State.

Although the descriptive findings suggested that respondents perceived financial inadequacy as influencing academic performance, the inferential analysis shows that this influence is not statistically significant. This implies that the observed relationship may not be strong enough to establish a consistent or reliable effect.

Hypothesis 3

Interference from close relations has no significant influence on students’ academic performance in public secondary schools in Jalingo Education Zone, Taraba State.

Table 7. Chi-Square Test Statistic on the Influence of Interference from Close Relations on Students’ Academic Performance

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) |
|--------------------|--------|----|-----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 35.335 | 30 | .231 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 37.559 | 30 | .161 |

| | | | |
|------------------------------|-------|---|------|
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 4.384 | 1 | .036 |
| N of Valid Cases | 545 | | |

Note: df = degree of freedom

N = Number

Asump. Sig. = Asymptotic Significance

P>0.05 insignificant

The results presented in Table 7 show the Chi-square test of the influence of interference from close relations on students' academic performance.

The Pearson Chi-square value is $\chi^2(30) = 35.335$ with an associated p-value of 0.231. Since the p-value is greater than the 0.05 level of significance, the result is not statistically significant.

Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected (retained). This indicates that there is no statistically significant influence of interference from close relations on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Jalingo Education Zone, Taraba State.

While descriptive findings suggested that interference from close relations may influence students' academic performance, the Chi-square analysis indicates that this influence is not statistically significant.

Hypothesis 4

H04: Spousal battering has no significant influence on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Jalingo Education Zone, Taraba State.

Table 8. Chi-Square Test Statistic on the Influence of Spousal Battering on Students' Academic Performance

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 32.506 ^a | 29 | .298 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 35.592 | 29 | .186 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 1.981 | 1 | .159 |
| N of Valid Cases | 545 | | |

Note: df = degree of freedom

N = Number

Asump. Sig. = Asymptotic Significance

P>0.05 insignificant

The results presented in Table 8 show the Chi-square test of the influence of spousal battering on students' academic performance.

The Pearson Chi-square value is $\chi^2(29) = 32.506$ with an associated p-value of 0.298. Since the p-value is greater than the 0.05 level of significance, the result is not statistically significant.

Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected (retained). This indicates that there is **no** statistically significant influence of spousal battering on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Jalingo Education Zone, Taraba State. Although the descriptive findings suggested that spousal battering may influence students' academic performance, the inferential analysis shows that this influence is not statistically significant. This implies that the observed relationship is not strong enough to establish a statistically reliable effect.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of marital conflict on the academic performance of public secondary school students in Jalingo Educational Zone, Taraba State. Guided by Karl Marx's Conflict Theory, the study investigated four dimensions of marital conflict—emotional instability, economic deprivation, loss of parental upbringing, and anxiety of marital breakdown—and their influence on students' academic outcomes.

Descriptive results revealed that respondents generally agreed that these variables influence academic performance, as indicated by mean scores above the 2.5 criterion. This suggests that students perceive parental emotional instability, inadequate financial support, interference from extended family members, and spousal battering as factors that negatively affect their learning. These perceptions align with recent studies in Nigeria, which have consistently reported that marital instability contributes to maladaptive behaviours, poor school attendance, and reduced achievement (Owobamigbe, 2024; Onyela, Adams & Duchi, 2025).

However, inferential analysis using the Chi-Square test showed that none of the four variables had a statistically significant effect on students' academic performance at the 0.05 alpha level. This finding indicates that while students recognize marital conflict as a challenge, its direct measurable impact on academic achievement may be less pronounced than expected. The result supports Chukwu (2025), who found that although marital instability is associated with emotional distress among students, its statistical influence on academic performance was limited when controlling for other factors.

The lack of significant relationships suggests that other variables such as school environment, peer influence, teacher quality, and individual resilience may play stronger roles in determining academic outcomes. It also highlights the possibility that students develop coping mechanisms that mitigate the effects of family instability on their schooling.

Overall, the findings underscore the complexity of academic performance as a multidimensional construct influenced by both family and non-family factors. While marital conflict remains a social concern with potential psychological consequences, its direct statistical impact on academic achievement in the Jalingo educational zone appears minimal.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the effect of marital conflict on the academic performance of public secondary school students in Jalingo Educational Zone, Taraba State. Guided by Karl Marx's Conflict Theory, the research examined four dimensions of marital conflict—emotional instability, economic deprivation, loss of parental upbringing, and anxiety of marital breakdown.

Descriptive results indicated that students perceived these variables as influential factors affecting their academic performance. However, inferential analysis using the Chi-Square test revealed that none of the variables had a statistically significant effect at the 0.05 alpha level. This finding suggests that while marital conflict is recognized as a challenge by students, its direct measurable impact on academic achievement may be limited.

The study therefore concludes that marital conflict, though socially and psychologically disruptive, does not exert a statistically significant influence on students' academic performance in the Jalingo Educational Zone. Other factors—such as school environment, peer influence, teacher quality, and individual resilience—may play stronger roles in shaping academic outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Future studies should investigate other variables that may influence students' academic performance, including school-related factors, peer dynamics, and socio-economic conditions beyond marital conflict.
2. Schools should strengthen counselling services to help students cope with emotional stress arising from family instability, ensuring that psychological wellbeing is supported alongside academic development.

3. Parents should be encouraged to maintain active involvement in their children's education, even in the face of marital challenges, to provide consistent guidance and motivation.
4. Educational policymakers should design programs that integrate family counselling and parental education into school systems, recognizing the broader role of family stability in student success.
5. Community-based initiatives should be developed to sensitize families on the importance of conflict resolution and its potential impact on children's educational outcomes.

Counselling Implications

The findings of this study, which revealed that marital conflict does not exert a statistically significant influence on students' academic performance in Jalingo Educational Zone, nonetheless carry important implications for counselling practice. While the statistical evidence suggests limited direct impact, the descriptive results highlight students' perceptions that emotional instability, economic deprivation, loss of parental upbringing, and anxiety of marital breakdown are challenges that affect their learning experiences. These perceptions underscore the need for counselling interventions that address both the psychological and social dimensions of family instability.

1. School-Based Counselling Programs:

- a. Counsellors should design and implement school-based programs that help students develop coping strategies for managing stress and anxiety associated with family conflict.
- b. Group counselling sessions can provide peer support, normalize experiences, and reduce feelings of isolation among affected students.

2. Parental Counselling and Education:

- a. Counsellors should engage parents in workshops and seminars that emphasize the importance of maintaining supportive relationships with children, even in the face of marital challenges.
- b. Family counselling interventions can help couples develop conflict resolution skills, thereby reducing the negative spillover effects on children.

3. Emotional and Psychological Support:

- a. Individual counselling should focus on building resilience, self-esteem, and emotional regulation among students who perceive instability at home.
- b. Counsellors can employ cognitive-behavioural techniques to help students reframe negative experiences and maintain focus on academic goals.

4. Career and Academic Guidance:

- a. Counsellors should provide targeted academic and career guidance to students from unstable homes, ensuring they remain motivated and supported in their educational pursuits.
- b. Mentorship programs can supplement parental guidance, offering students role models and consistent encouragement.

5. Policy and Advocacy Role:

- c. Counsellors should advocate for the integration of family counselling services into school systems, recognizing the broader role of family stability in student success.
- d. Collaboration with community leaders, religious institutions, and NGOs can extend counselling support beyond schools to families in the wider community.

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