



Marital Conflicts and the Girl Child: Implication for Crime and Socioeconomic Development in Christian Families

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Abstract

The study explored the consequences of marital conflicts on the Girl child in Christian families from the perspective of crime and socioeconomic development, using a descriptive survey research design to generate responses from 142 participants. Participants were randomly selected while data were collected utilizing semi structured questionnaire. Data gathered were analyzed through the use of SPSS tool. Family systems theory and Social learning theory were utilized as underpinnings to explain the consequences of marital conflicts on the Girl Child in Christian families on the girl child. Findings indicates that marital conflict exists within Christian families in Ikeja Lagos State. Motivators were infidelity, the number of children, financial issues, domestic violence, and family interference. It also points that unresolved parental conflict affects the girl child, leading to child abuse and poor access to good education. The victims exhibited aggression, suffered depressed, and performed poor in academics due to absent mindedness and psychological issues. Study recommends that there must be deliberate Government engagement in counseling services, enacting and strengthening existing laws that will curb marital conflict and punishing offenders, creating more awareness on the rights of the girl child and collaboration between the government, church and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

Keywords: Marital, Marital Conflicts, Girl child, Christian homes, Crime.

Introduction

Marital conflicts are an inevitable aspect of family dynamics, but their implications on children, particularly the girl child, have drawn increasing scholarly and societal attention. In Christian families, where cultural and religious values often place a premium on harmonious family life, the occurrence of marital disputes poses unique challenges. These challenges are magnified when viewed through the lens of the girl child, who is often more vulnerable to the psychological, emotional, and developmental consequences of such discord. The girl child in such environments may experience long-term effects, including diminished self-esteem, academic struggles, and lessened social relationships. This study seeks to examine these consequences, contextualized within Christian families and analyzed through global, African, and Nigerian perspectives, with a specific focus on Lagos State.

Globally, research has consistently underscored the detrimental effects of marital conflicts on children. For instance, parental discord has been linked to adverse outcomes such as anxiety, depression, and behavioral problems in children (Amato & Sobolewski, 2016). In many societies, the girl child faces additional pressures due to gendered expectations and limited coping mechanisms. Studies in Western contexts reveal that children from high-conflict homes are more likely to struggle with school performance and social integration (Hetherington & Elmore, 2020).

In Africa, the intersection of socio-cultural norms and marital discord often exacerbates the challenges faced by children. African societies traditionally prioritize communal living and collective child-rearing, but the prevalence of marital conflicts can disrupt these support



systems. According to Abane (2021), in sub-Saharan Africa, girl children from crisis-prone families often face intensified risks of early marriage, domestic violence, and inadequate access to education. This is particularly obvious in contexts where cultural values prioritize familial reputation over individual well-being.

In Nigeria, the prevalence of marital conflicts is influenced by socio-economic stressors, cultural dynamics, and evolving gender roles (Okafor et al., 2022). Research indicates that children, especially girls, often bear the brunt of these conflicts, experiencing emotional neglect, academic setbacks, and vulnerability to societal vices (Adewale & Bamidele, 2021). The situation is further compounded in urban centers like Lagos State, where the pressures of urbanization and economic hardship intensify marital tensions. Despite these realities, studies focusing specifically on the girl child within Christian families in Lagos remain sparse, creating a significant gap in the literature.

While substantial research has explored the impact of marital conflicts on children globally and in Nigeria, limited attention has been given to the unique experiences of the girl child within Christian families. Existing studies often focus on general outcomes for children or highlight broader socio-economic dimensions of marital discord (Amato & Sobolewski, 2016; Adewale & Bamidele, 2021). However, the gendered nuances of these conflicts and their implications for the girl child remain underexplored.

In Lagos State, a megacity characterized by its socio-economic diversity and rapid urbanization, the interaction of marital conflicts and religious values presents a complex dynamic. Previous studies, such as that by Okafor et al. (2022), have examined marital conflicts in Nigerian families but have not explored deeply into the detailed impacts on the girl child within Christian contexts. Furthermore, empirical data on Lagos State is limited, creating a critical gap in understanding how these conflicts affect developmental outcomes for the girl child in urban Christian families. It is against this

background that this study aims to explore the consequences of marital conflicts on the girl child in Christian families from the perspective of crime and socioeconomic development, with a particular focus on Lagos State. It seeks to fill the empirical and literature gap through the examination of the psychological, emotional, and developmental impacts of marital discord on the girl child, investigating how religious and cultural values within Christian families shape these outcomes while also providing evidence-based recommendations to mitigate the adverse effects of marital conflicts on the girl child in Lagos State. Through the proper address of these objectives, the study will make modest contributions to a detailed understanding of the challenges faced by the girl child in conflict-prone Christian families and provide actionable orientation for policymakers, educators, and religious leaders.

Conceptual Clarifications

Marital Conflicts

Clarifying the term marriage connotes different meanings and things to different persons and it comes about in dynamic ways in different cultural orientation and religion, whatever pattern the marriage is consummated, there must be social agreements. It implies a cord of unity that brings a man and a woman who agrees to share a life together for the purpose of establishing a family (Ridwan in Abubakar, 2017). In this context, Marriage can be said to be a socially and legally permitted sexual relationship where parties tangled have mutual understanding for reproduction and protection of their future descendants (Musa, 2017). Whatever serves as a sprain to this relationship can therefore be termed as conflict. Thus, Marital volatility also known as conflict in marriage simply refers to the relational challenges within the marital relationship which is usually caused by many factors (Ajai and Ipaye in Adejare (2018). The increasing rate of marriage cum family conflict by ways of divorce in the society today lays weight to the fact that there are concerns in marital homes (Olaitan, 2003). In agreement with Olaitan, 2003; Animashaun (2014) asserts the fact that marital conflict is a



spectacle that destabilizes couples, interrupts their joy and mostly felt by women yet, most unrecognized human rights abuse on the planet. It is also a challenging social problem that drains a woman's strength mentally while also compromising their physical health and eradicating their self-worth. Furthermore, it can hypothetically be clarified as natural and intrinsic singularities to marital relationship, which basically emanates from different interests, sentiments, standpoints between couples and an open conflict between partners, which often generates disagreements and relationship complications (Delatorre & Wagner, 2018).

Girl Child

The term "girl child" can be clarified as a female human being from birth through the period of adolescence. The United Nations (UN) defines a girl child as "a female child below the age of 18 years, unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier" (UNICEF, 1989). This demographic is significant in discussions about development, education, and human rights due to the unique challenges they face globally, including gender-based discrimination, child marriage, and lack of access to education (UNICEF, 2014).

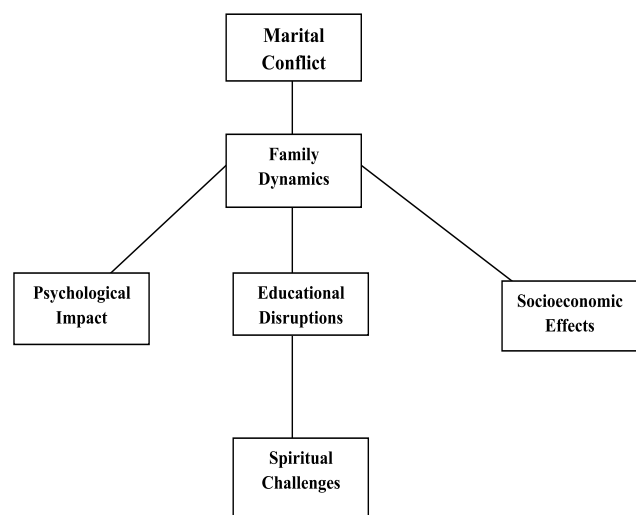
Amongst numerous characteristics of the girl child is their physical features as a girl child naturally develops secondary sexual appearances during puberty, such as breast growth, the onset of menstruation, and a broader pelvis (Chumlea et al., 2003). This is in addition to other psychological development that makes her undergoes cognitive and emotional growth influenced by family, cultural values, and societal expectations (Piaget, 1952).

It is also imperative to note that the Girl child also has a social identity. A girl child often experiences societal roles shaped by gender norms and cultural expectations, which influence her upbringing and opportunities (UNESCO, 2019). The girl child is often a focal point in policies stimulating gender fairness, as endowing her can lead to bigger societal benefits (World Bank, 2011).

The Christian Home

A Christian home is a domestic environment guided by Christian principles, values, and practices. It is characterized by faith in Jesus Christ as the foundation of family life, love as the binding force, and the Bible as the instructional guide (Joshua 24:15). According to Gangel and Gangel (1997), a Christian home aims to nurture spiritual growth, moral integrity, and mutual respect among family members.

Conceptual Framework



The above framework explains how marital conflicts creates a change of issues in a family ranging from unstable and tensed family environment while also affecting emotional and relational dynamics. Particularly its effects on family dynamics shows that it has large consequence on the girl child through psychological impact that leads to anxiety, low self-esteem and depression of the Girl Child. Also, it has the tendency to lead to educational disruptions through the unstable environments it opens that may lead to absenteeism from school and poor academic performances. Accordingly, the Girl child may also suffer from social effects as the child may struggle with building healthy relationships and thereafter becoming vulnerable to negative peer influences going forward. Furthermore, exposing a girl child to marital conflict could lead to confusion about Christian values, diminishing trusts in God and lack of



interest in spiritual teachings. Summarily, it highlights the ripple effects of marital conflict on the girl child.

Literature Review

Globally, studies underscore the psychological and emotional toll of marital discord on children. For girls, this exposure is particularly detrimental, as they are more likely to internalize stress compared to boys (Grych & Fincham, 2015). International research has shown that girls exposed to marital conflict often exhibit symptoms of anxiety, depression, and relational difficulties in adulthood (Ayodele, 2020). These outcomes are exacerbated in Christian families, where the idealization of marriage conflicts with the lived reality of discord.

Christian families often emphasize forgiveness and submission, values derived from scriptural teachings (Ephesians 5:22-25). However, when marital conflict persists, these teachings can create confusion for girls, who may struggle to reconcile their faith with their parents' actions (Bartkowski, 2020).

In African societies, the collectivist orientation amplifies the impact of marital conflict on children. Marital disputes often extend beyond the nuclear family, involving extended relatives and community members. For the girl child, this public scrutiny adds to the psychological burden (Eke et al., 2019). In Christian families, misinterpretations of scripture may further entrench patriarchal norms, leading to the girl child shouldering disproportionate responsibilities during periods of familial discord (Odeh & Akor, 2021).

Moreover, African studies highlight the interplay between economic challenges and marital conflict. Economic instability often exacerbates spousal disagreements, indirectly affecting children by disrupting their education and emotional stability. This was buttressed by studies like that of Kader Roman; 2018 which laid emphasis on the fact that in Christian households, the multi burden of poverty and marital challenges often forces the girl child into early domestic roles, limiting her development.

In Nigeria, the prevalence of marital conflict is closely linked to socio-economic and cultural factors. Research by Okonkwo and Eze (2020) reveals that girls in conflict-ridden Christian homes often face educational setbacks and a higher likelihood of early marriage. These outcomes are frequently rooted in the psychological toll of witnessing parental discord and the societal pressures to conform to traditional gender roles.

Nigerian studies also highlight the spiritual implications of marital conflict. For the girl child, the juxtaposition of Christian teachings on love and forgiveness with the reality of parental disputes can lead to spiritual disillusionment. Olusola and Adeyemi (2021) note that many girls from such backgrounds struggle with faith and are less likely to actively participate in religious activities, viewing them as hypocritical. Hence, girls often become caregivers in the wake of marital conflict, a role that disrupts their education and personal development. These responsibilities place an undue burden on the girl child, perpetuating cycles of poverty and limiting opportunities for upward mobility.

Marital discord is a significant predictor of anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem in children. For girls in Christian families, these emotional challenges are often compounded by the spiritual conflict of reconciling their parents' behavior with biblical teachings (Cummings & Goeke-Morey, 2016). The academic performance of girls in high-conflict families often suffers due to stress and reduced parental involvement. Nigerian research highlights that many girls drop out of school to manage domestic responsibilities or escape the emotional toll of their home environment (Aina & Odebode, 2018).

Acquaintance to marital conflict influences girls' perceptions of relationships. Studies in Nigeria (Okonkwo & Eze, 2020) reveal that girls from conflict-ridden homes are more likely to accept abusive or unbalanced associations as normal, prolonging cycles of relational dysfunction. The effects of marital conflict on the girl child in Christian families are profound and multifaceted.



Globally, these effects include psychological distress, academic challenges, and relational dysfunction. In African and Nigerian circumstances, cultural and economic factors aggravate these challenges, placing supplementary weights on the girl child. Speaking to these issues requires a all-inclusive approach, participating in faith-based counseling, economic support, and education to alleviate the influences of marital discord on vulnerable children.

Theoretical Underpinnings

The theoretical framework that x-rays the significances of marital conflicts on the girl child within Christian families, are underpinned in two significant theories namely; Family Systems Theory and Social Learning Theory. These theories offers an insight into how the family, environment and parental interactions influences a child's development, particularly in the situation of marital disharmony.

Family Systems Theory

Bowen's Family Systems Theory (1978) views families as interconnected systems where one member's actions affect others. Marital conflicts disrupt stability, potentially causing emotional distress and developmental issues, particularly for the girl child. The theory highlights how unresolved conflicts create instability, impacting emotional well-being and social behavior. Critics argue it overemphasizes interconnectedness, neglects cultural differences, and focuses excessively on dysfunction.

Applied to Christian families, where traditional and spiritual values influence roles and interactions, marital conflicts can create stress that undermines a supportive environment for the girl child's growth. The theory explains how parental dysfunction may lead to emotional withdrawal, academic struggles, or difficulties in forming healthy relationships.

Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory, proposed by Bandura (1977), lays emphasis on the fact that children learn behaviors by observing and imitating parents. Exposure to marital conflicts increases

the likelihood of children, particularly girls, assuming such behaviors in future relationships, perpetuating unhealthy relational patterns. Critics argue it overlooks biological influences, context, overgeneralization, and cognition.

In Christian families, where parents are seen as moral role models, ongoing marital conflicts may contradict the values they teach, leading to confusion and shaping negative behaviors in the girl child. The theory explains how observing impacts emotional development, self-esteem, and relationships discord.

Both theories underline parental interactions' role in shaping child development. While Family Systems Theory focuses on structural and emotional disruptions, Social Learning Theory explains how these behaviors are observed and replicated. Together, they provide a comprehensive view of how marital conflicts affect a girl child's emotional, social, and spiritual growth in Christian families.

Methodology

The study utilized the descriptive research design. The population of this study encompassed married couples, secondary school teachers and teenage students of the ages of 18 upwards. Using simple random sampling technique, fifteen (15) participants were selected from 10 wards, making a total of 150 respondents with 142 validly filled. The sampled wards were Wasimi/Opebi/Allenanifowoshe/Ikeja, Anifowoshe/Ikeja, Ojodu/Agidingbi/Omole, Airport/Onipetesi/Inilekere, Ipodo/Seriki Aro, Alausa/Oregun/Olusosun, Adekunle Vill/Adeniyi Jones/Ogba, Onigbongbon, GRA/Police Barracks and Oke Ira/Aguda. A questionnaire was developed as the instrument for data collection. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics tool (SPSS) while percentage distribution, frequencies, tables and charts were used in the presentation of results. Ethical consent of the respondents were sorted before carrying of the study.

Apriori Expectations

The “*Apriori Expectations*” for the study is that



marital conflict has series of implications on the girl child in a Christian family. The study expects that it will have psychological, social and spiritual impact on the girl child.

Data Analysis

Table 1: Demographic Variables of Respondents

	Category	Percentage (%)
Gender of Respondents	Male	53.5 (%)
	Female	46.5 (%)
Age	18.30 Years	12.7 (%)
	31-45 Years	38.7 (%)
	46-60 Years	45.8 (%)
	61 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%)
	Ijaw	2 (1.4%)
	Biom	4 (2.8%)
Educational Level	WASCE/SSCE O-Level	23.9%
	ND/NCE	29.6%
	HND/BSc	45.1%
	Postgraduate	1.4%
Monthly Income	Less than N50,000	12.7%
	N50,000 - N200,000	19%
	N200,001 - N350,000	28.2%
	N350,001 - N500,000	35.9%
	Above N500,000	16.9%

Source: Field Work

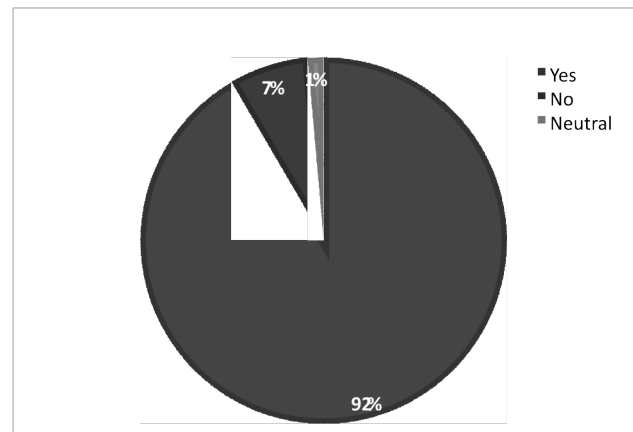
The respondents consisted more of males than females, with majority of them aged between 46 to 60 years of age. Yoruba dominated the ethnicity of the respondents, followed by Igbo and Hausa. The dominance of the Yoruba and Igbo is explainable, considering that Lagos is in South West Nigeria and dominated by the Yoruba ethnic group. Lagos state also has a large number of Igbos who migrated for different reasons ranging from business to career engagement.

The study population is dominated by people who have a Higher National Diploma (HND)/ BSc, followed by those with a National Diploma (ND)/

National Certificate of Education (NCE), earning between N350,000 and N500,000 monthly.

Prevalence of marital conflict among Christian families in Ikeja LGA of Lagos State

Figure 1: Prevalence of marital conflict within Christian families in Ikeja LGA

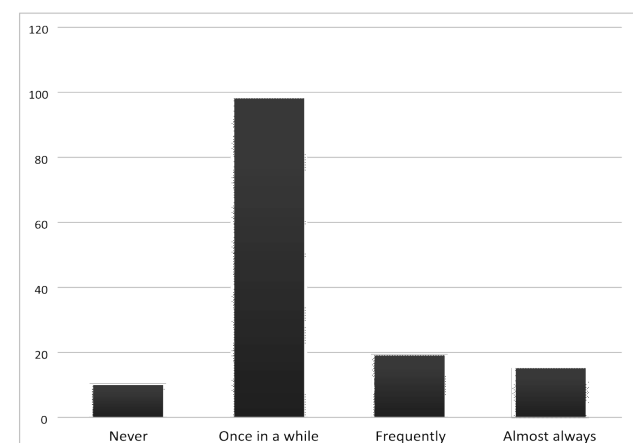


Source: Field

Overwhelmingly, 92% of the respondents confirmed the existence of marriage in Christian families in Ikeja LGA of Lagos State. Only 7% denied such while 1% were neutral. The result shows the inevitability of conflict between and among human beings despite being of the Christian religious faith. The inevitability arises when individuals or groups interact and interests varies.

Frequency of Marital Conflict

Figure 2: Frequency of Marital Conflict



Source: Field Work



Despite the huge acknowledgment of the existence of marital conflict in most Christian families in Ikeja LGA of Lagos State, 69% of the respondents agreed that they rarely experience it while 13% thought that it occurs frequently despite their Christian background. About 11% confessed that marital conflict occurs almost always while 7% denied its existence.

Causes of Marital Conflicts among Christian Homes in Ikeja LGA of Lagos State

Table 2: Causes of marital conflict within Christian families in Ikeja LGA

Variables	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Number of Children	60	36	10	20	16
Religious Affiliation and Practice	34	58	6	21	23
Communication Style	11	29	12	50	40
Financial Issues	102	20	1	5	11
Infidelity and Satisfaction issues	120	13	2	4	3
Role Specification	12	30	7	56	37
Domestic Violence and Poor Mental Health	106	24	3	7	5
Family Inference	24	44	12	20	42
Cultural Practices	18	11	5	38	70

Source: Field Work

It has become imperative to understand the causes of marital conflict within Christian families in Ikeja LGA of Lagos State. Out of the 142 respondents, 96 affirmed that disagreement over the expected number of children in the family resulted in marital conflicts while 36 argued against that and 10 were neutral. The number of children overwhelmingly defines the family's economic power and their ability to take care of the girl child. This standpoint was corroborated by 122 respondents who affirmed that financial issues lead to marital conflicts in families. This finding aligns with Ibukun and Ogunseye's (2018)

assertion that economic volatility and finance stresses 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 than the number of children, 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 a precursor to marital conflict. While it can be argued that poor 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 Ikeja LGA as the metropolitan nature of the area compels spouses to assist each other in meeting up with family responsibilities.

Human Rights Violations against the Girl Child in Christian Families in Ikeja LGA

Table 3: Human Rights Violations against the Girl Child in Christian Families in Ikeja LGA



Variables	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Sex exploitation	11	11	2	90	28
Female genital mutilation	8	14	1	89	30
Early child marriage	7	9	2	78	46
Access to good education	57	38	11	17	19
Child Abuse	50	55	2	13	22
Gender discrimination	38	10	1	54	39

Source: Field Work

Data from the questionnaire into the forms of human rights violations against the girl child in Christian families in Ikeja LGA of Lagos State shows that child abuse and access to good education are more predominant than others. With the economic conditions in some states, without the exception of Lagos State, families, irrespective of their religious associations, are forced to send their children, especially the girl child into selling of goods along the major highways in the state as a means of extra source of income. Some of them are forced into hawking against their will. That affects the level and quality of education they get in schools. Being Christian families, sex exploitation, female genital mutilation early child marriage and gender discrimination were uncommon as agreed by many of the respondents.

Effects of Marital Conflict on the Girl Child

Table 4: Effects of marital conflict on the girl child

Variables	Totally True (%)	True (%)	Partially True (%)	Partially Not True (%)	Not True (%)	Not True At All (%)

More aggressive in their behaviour	20.4	18.3	21.8	22.5	7	9.9
More likely to be disobedient	18.3	14.1	16.2	28.9	8.5	14.1
Exhibit anxiety about issues	22.5	18.3	17.6	22.5	5.7	13.4
Experience depression symptoms	23.2	17.6	18.3	23.9	9.9	7
Difficulty in developing healthy emotional skills	19.7	10.6	21.1	32.4	4.9	11.3
Have low self-esteem	21.8	14.1	17.6	26.8	9.2	10.5
Poor communication pattern	14.2	26.1	13	9.2	21.8	16.7
Poor assimilation	24.6	13.4	16.2	23.9	7.8	14.1
Exhibit empty mindedness	19.7	10.6	19.7	29.6	9.9	10.5
Exhibit a low level of concentration in class	24.6	15.5	11.5	27.5	11.3	9.6
Experience poor financial plan	14.1	12.7	16.2	23.2	12.7	21.1
Exhibit hostile behaviour that negatively affects their marital relationships	23.9	12.7	17.6	26.1	8.5	11.3
Exhibit emotional distance from their spouse when they get married	21.1	11.3	10.5	28.9	12.7	15.5
Level of trust with their spouse when they get married	25.4	14.1	15.5	25.4	12	7.6
Suspicious of their spouse when they get married	23.2	16.2	12	21.8	12.7	14.1
Impatient when handling	19	12.7	17.6	23.2	15.5	12
Impatient when handling relationship issues	19	12.7	17.6	23.2	15.5	12

Source: Field Work



The girl child is affected by marital conflict in different ways that range from aggressive behaviour to distrust and impatience. Table 4 shows the degree of the different ways the phenomenon affects the girl child. Over 60.5% of the respondents affirmed that marital conflict within Christian families in Ikeja LGA of Lagos State makes the girl child exhibit aggressive behaviour while 39.5% had a contrary opinion. They also face anxiety issues and depression as corroborated by 58.4% and 59.1% of the respondents respectively. However, such fears may not mean that the victims must be disobedient as corroborated by 51.3% of the respondents who attested that girl children from Christian families who have serious marital conflict are not likely to be disobedient.

The Girl child from Christian families that have serious marital conflicts also suffer from low esteem as proved by 53.3 % of the respondents. With low esteem, they find it difficult to develop healthy emotional skills as proven by 51.4% of the respondents and suffer from poor assimilation, affirmed by 54.2% of the respondents. Their academic performances are affected as 51.6% of the respondents argue that they exhibit poor concentration in the classroom.

Marital conflict negatively impacts the girl child's social interactions. About 53.3% of the respondents affirmed that such conflicts make the girl child exhibit social withdrawal. When grown, they exhibit hostile behavior that negatively affects their own marital relationships as confirmed by 54.2% of the respondents. Also, 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 the girl child

Table 5: 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 girl child	15.2	7.3	31.8	21.9	10.5	13.3
Government conducts researches on marital conflict and apply results to minimize effects on the girl child	18.3	10.1	14.2	24.1	18.2	15.1
Government has institution (s), Guidance and Counselling units in public institutions to combat marital conflict and its effects	22.9	33.2	18.3	13	5.6	7
Churches have counseling units to solve marital issues and their effects on the girl child.	38.5	12.6	31.1	4.4	9.1	4.3
Churches operate welfare and empowerment packages to help the girl child	21.8	23.5	15.6	12.7	16.4	10
Churches organize prayer sessions for victims of marital conflicts	22.2	34.1	18	5.7	10.2	9.8
Churches organize outreach and fellowship programs that educate parents on marital issues	22.4	34.4	16.2	13.1	9.9	4
CSOs and NGOs organize advocacy campaigns against marital conflict and implications on the girl child through radio and television programs	14.7	11.5	20.2	25.5	20.6	7.5
CSOs and NGOs engage in Human rights activism to curb marital conflict and its effects on the girl child	20.3	20.5	9.5	18.6	26.5	4.6

Source: Field Work

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 Ikeja LGA have benefited from seminars and conferences on the subject matter by public and private institutions, including schools and hospitals. 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. Data also indicates that 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 t counseling services to mitigate its effects on the girl child, as attested to by about 82.2% of the respondents. Churches also engage in welfare services and prayer intercessions as affirmed by 60.9% and 74.3% of the respondents respectively.

Discussion of Findings

The study emphasizes the predictability of marital conflict within Christian families in Ikeja LGA, Lagos State, despite communal religious values. Notable findings shows that financial issues, unfaithfulness, sexual displeasure, domestic violence, and mental health challenges are the primary drivers of marital conflict, aligning with past research (Ibukun & Ogunseye, 2018; Akinyemi & Isiugo-Abanihe, 2016). Defiantly, communication styles, role specifications, and cultural practices had slight influence due to the urban and progressive nature of Ikeja.

The girl child emerges as a dominant victim of marital discord, with adverse impacts ranging from aggressive behavior and depression to poor academic performance and social withdrawal. These effects echo the findings of Cummings & Davies (2010) and Adebayo & Olaoye (2012), who perceived similar outcomes in children exposed to domestic strife. The mental strain experienced by affected girl's demonstrates as anxiety, distrust, and low self-esteem, hypothetically impairing their future relationships and group integration.

Interventions by government and religious bodies were notable. Institutions like the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency (DSVA) and Citizen's Mediation Center provide critical

support to victims. Churches complement these efforts through counseling, welfare programs, and prayer intercessions, reflecting findings by Okechukwu (2014) and Omololu (2017). However, the government's limited research and application of findings to mitigate marital conflict highlight a gap in proactive policy-making.

Civil society and NGOs also play pivotal roles, particularly in advocating for girl child rights and raising awareness during events like the International Day of the Girl Child. Their efforts resonate with broader human rights advocacy and contribute to reducing the societal stigma surrounding marital conflict.

Conclusively, while some advancement has been made in addressing marital conflict and its impact on the girl child, more all-inclusive and research-driven approaches are required to enhance outcomes for affected families and children.

Conclusion

The study provided insight on the consequences of marital conflict on the Girl child amongst Christian families in Ikeja LGA of Lagos State. The findings of the study stresses the need to at all cost avoid marital conflict in the proposition to boast the child's emotional, psychological, and social development. The study further shows that aggression, depression, poor academic performance and disruptions in relationships in adulthood are consequences of marital conflict with significant impact on crime rates and socioeconomic growth. Children raised in violent homes are more prone to commit crimes, which puts a burden on the legal and law enforcement systems. Additionally, this raises healthcare expenses, worker disruption, and economic instability. A trained workforce cannot be developed if intervention is not provided. To forestall such impacts, the study underscores the importance of support services and interventions by government and nongovernmental institutions. Through the proper tackling of marital conflict among Christian couples in Ikeja LGA of Lagos State, the development of the girl child, her rights and civil liberties will be assured.



Recommendations

In light of the findings on marital conflict and its detrimental impact on the girl child, the following recommendations are presented to effectively address these challenges:

Firstly, it is crucial to create awareness among parents and the general public about the damaging effects of marital conflict on the well-being of the girl child. Sensitization programs should prioritize outreach to rural communities, where access to information may be limited. These campaigns must emphasize the importance of promptly resolving parental conflicts to reduce their adverse effects on children.

Secondly, counseling units should be established in every ward within Ikeja Local Government Area to provide accessible professional support for victims of marital conflict. Furthermore, churches should be encouraged to set up similar counseling centers within their premises. These centers should offer follow-up services to ensure continuous support for victims, preventing relapses and fostering recovery.

Thirdly, the government and non-governmental organizations should collaborate to establish safe spaces where victims of marital conflict can share their experiences without fear of stigma or judgment. These spaces should promote healing, emotional support, and community trust while linking victims to resources for psychological and emotional rehabilitation.

Fourthly, the government should implement and enforce specific policies to address marital conflict, complementing existing legislative frameworks. For instance:

- **The Nigerian Constitution (1999, as amended)** under Section 34 guarantees every individual the right to dignity, which includes protection against inhumane or degrading treatment, a provision violated in many cases of marital conflict.
- **The Lagos State Penal Code (2003) and Criminal Code Act (Cap C38 LFN 2004)** address offenses such as physical abuse and neglect within family settings.

These frameworks provide legal avenues for addressing severe marital disputes.

- **The Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (VAPP Act, 2015)**, adopted by Lagos State, prohibits acts of violence, including spousal abuse, and mandates penalties for offenders, ranging from fines and imprisonment to compulsory rehabilitation.
- **Lagos State's Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency (DSVA) policies** provide additional measures for protecting victims of marital conflict and promoting their rights.

The recommended policies should expand on these frameworks to address non-physical abuses such as emotional harm or financial neglect. Suggested penalties for offenders include mandatory counseling, supervised family mediation, community service, fines, or imprisonment, depending on the severity of the offense. These measures aim to deter abusive behavior and protect vulnerable individuals, particularly children.

Finally, research on marital conflict should be broadened to consider the diverse contexts in which it thrives. This includes exploring the socio-cultural, religious, and economic factors that perpetuate marital discord. By examining these dimensions, researchers can develop more targeted strategies to mitigate marital conflict and its implications for children, especially the girl child.

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