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INFLUENCE OF MARITAL INSTABILITY ON THE PSYCHO-SOCIO COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS FROM ANAMBRA STATE NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study was on the influence of marital instability of the psycho-socio cognitive development of secondary school students from Anambra State Nigeria. Five research questions guided the study and descriptive survey design was used to carry out the study. The population of the study was all the senior secondary school students from Anambra State (SSS1, 11,111) totaling about 37,260 students. The sample size consisted of 2000 students selected using multi-stage sampling techniques. The research instrument was a researcher-developed instrument consisting of five clusters which rated the influence of marital instability on the psycho-socio cognitive development of students. Five research questions guided the study and the data collected was analyzed using mean scores and standard deviations. The result revealed very negative and low influence from parents and homes experiencing instability. The following recommendations among others were proffered: remedial programs for children from unstable homes, intervention by stakeholders through conferences, the assistance of counsellors, proper marriage formation.

Keywords: influence, marital instability, psycho-socio cognitive development, Secondary school students, Anambra State.

Introduction:

Humanity which literature had traced not to be a product of chance had a divine origin. The same literature called this divine source of human origin a creator and Christian scholars gave the divine being names such as God, Elohim, El-shaddai, Adonai etc. One of the most beautiful things endowed to humanity by the creator (divine being) is the ability to procreate. Procreation is a quality which gives a man and woman which divine will joined together to become husband and wife the ability to produce offspring. The coming together of the man and woman gave rise to an aspect of the family called conjugal family and it is formally entered through the celebration of marriages.

Many authors have made attempt at defining marriage. According to Okudo (2016) marriage is a lasting bond of love between one man and one woman which not only produces physical acts of procreation at particular moments in that relationship but also enables the children produced from that act to be raised and nurtured so that they will be useful to the society. This view was shared by other researchers such as Uka (2013). According to him, marriage is a legalizing of a special relationship between a man and a woman for which the society gives approval and places the partner under legal obligations to themselves and the society. The aforementioned statement implies that the partners are mutually responsible for their wellbeing.

Very often however, the partners are found to deviate from observing the legal obligations and mutual responsibility imposed on them by their status consequently resulting to marital conflicts in the homes. When homes are conflict prone, it leads to marital instability.

Marital instability according to the World Health Organization (W.H.O) 2017 is intimate partner violence between adults, child abuses and neglect in a home characterized by violence, verbal, emotional, physical torture and minor stresses. Lesmin and Sarker (2018) defined marital instability as the process whereby marriages breakdown through interpersonal association and interactions within the marital relationship. This could be as a result of increasing incidence of marital disharmony (Ezeannaya, 2016), attempts to checkmate the partner (Uka, 2013), poor communication, interpersonal difficulties, sadomasochistic relationship etc.

Instability plays a strong devastating role in the family in that it leads to factors such as quarrelling, disharmony and in very severe and extreme cases can cause desertion, separation and divorce. The overwhelming consequence of the above factor on child socialization is immense. Maxims such as when two elephants fight, the grasses suffer becomes tenable. When parents (family) are in turmoil as a result of instability, the socialization functions of the family is hindered consequently affecting the well-being of the children and their general adjustment psycho-socio cognitive inclusive.

The term psycho-socio cognitive development is a complex term coined from three very significant aspects of human development. It depicts the psychological, social and cognitive dimensions of development. This can also be lumped into psycho-social and cognitive development or socio-cognitive and psychological development. As mentioned earlier, from whatever perspective the lumping is done, it is concerned with the psychological, social and cognitive development of children. Viewing it from psycho-social and cognitive dimension,

Okudo (2022) views psychosocial changes/adaptions as psychological and social aspects of adjustment that pertains to the interactions between social and psychological factors to produce a positive change. On the other hand, the term cognitive is derived from the Latin word "cognosere", implying to know or understand and it refers to mental processes through which knowledge is achieved. It can also be seen as processes that supports intellectual development. Therefore psycho-socio cognitive development will be the awareness/understanding of intellectual, adaptation, social and psychological development factor that produces positive changes and influences an individual. Put succinctly, it entails the variables that support cognitive, social and psychological development of a child. With respect to the cognitive development, it looks at variables such as provision of necessary school materials, monitoring home work, assisting in doing assignments, payment of necessary dues/fees, provision of school dress, purchase of reading texts/exercise books, visitation of counsellors, participation in P.T.A, encourage extra lectures, etc. (Okudo, 2013). Concerning the social aspects, it looks at features such as social interactions, verbal expressions, relationship with parents, encourages dialogues, interest in other persons, participation in social events, encourages peer interactions, sense of co-operation with others, etc. On the psychological development items, we have variables such as " your satisfaction with your general appearance, your behavior stability, level of smartness, level of calm, feeling of security, concern and interest about the future, discusses sex issues with you, adapting to new images, acquiring personal identity, learning to control sexuality confirming independence with respect to parents etc.

Literature affirms that proper socialization will accomplish the above and among others in the child whose parents were available to take care of their well being. Melissa et al … (2016) rightly pointed that most parents are indisposed to carry out their parental roles in the family and these could lead to problematic behaviors such as delinquency, aggression, behavior disorders, poor academic achievement etc. In a similar manner, Kumoyi (2014) noted that students from conflict free families have been shown to exhibit positive adjustment in all domains of developments. Supporting this view, Saker (2017), Lesmin & Parker (2018) rightly pointed out that conflicting families had very significant negative impacts on the cognitive and psychosocial development of their children. Implying that where the homes are free, children tend to exhibit positive behaviors on the contrary where the homes are negatives and the environment is tensed because of marital conflicts the children raised up in such environment are traumatized. Onwuasoanaya (2016) noted that marital conflicted families and homes are characterized by quarrels, aggressions, emotional instability, trauma and fear. The overall consequence is that Jobs done in such homes are usually not well done hence diminishing productivity from all angles. In a similar manner Boakye &Ardayrio (2015) posited that the fragility of marital bond is notable among contemporary generation, it spares no commitment and it is present at all levels consequently resulting to a delicate society endangers education as well as the task and trust that sustain the society. Kelly (2012) also noted that interpersonal conflicts in marriages and homes had adverse effects on children and adolescent achievement.

Based on the above, the researcher is empirically led to determine how marital instability affects the psycho-socio cognitive development of secondary school students from Anambra State Nigeria.

Statement of the problem

The high level of decadence and moral depravity among our younger generations in the society of nowadays is very alarming and calls for concern from every quarters. It is crystal clear, visibly seen and glaring to all that disrespect, disobedience, arrogance, under achievement, poor relational ability characterized the crust of behaviors exhibited by these young children.

This is because parents are at enmity and consequently could not carry out their nurturing responsibility effectively. Sarker (2017), Kumuyi (2014) Lesmin and Sarker (2014), all noted the negative influences marital instability could cause on nurturance and socializations. When these parents are separated or divorced, the child's welfare rests solely on the single parents thereby creating mother or father absence as the case may be. Furthermore, desertion of matrimonial home by one member could also lead to poor child care and neglect. Finally, families experiencing martial instability are prone to quarrelling, fighting, violence and torture. These affect the emotional and psychological disposition of the child consequently leading to bottled emotions which may result to personality tints in the young child's development. It becomes necessary therefore to find out from these children the extent marital instability has negatively influenced their psycho-socio cognitive development.

Therefore, the problem which this study addresses is put in a question form thus: what is the influence of marital instability on the psycho-socio cognitive development of children in Anambra State, Nigeria?

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of study is to investigate the influence of marital instability on the psycho-socio cognitive development of secondary school students in Anambra State Nigeria.

The study specifically sought to:

(a) Determine the influence of marital instability on the psychological development of adolescents from Anambra State
(b) Determine the influence of marital instability on the social development adolescents from Anambra State
(c) Determine the influence of marital instability on their cognitive development adolescents from Anambra State
(d) Determine the influence of marital instability on the psychosocial development adolescents from Anambra State
(e) Determine the influence of marital instability on their socio-cognitive development adolescents from Anambra State.

Research questions

The following research questions guided the study:

(1) What is the influence of marital instability on the psychological development of senior secondary school students from Anambra State Nigeria?
(2) What is the influence of marital instability on the social development of senior secondary school students from Anambra State Nigeria?
(3) What is the influence of marital instability on the psychological development of senior secondary school students from Anambra State Nigeria?

(4) What is the influence of marital instability on the psychosocial development of senior secondary school students from Anambra State Nigeria?
(5) What is the influence of marital instability on the socio-cognitive development of senior secondary school students from Anambra State Nigeria?

Method

The design was descriptive survey, the area of study was Anambra State and the population of study consisted of all the senior secondary schools (SS1 – SSIII) students in Anambra State during the 2022/2023 academic year made up of 37,260 students. The sample size was 2000 students selected through multi-stage sampling techniques. The reliability of the instrument was established using split half method and the result analyzed using cronbachs ($\propto$) which yielded a reliability co-efficient of 0.72. A total of 2000 copies of questionnaires were distributed through a team of briefed assistances carefully supervised by the researcher. All questionnaires items were returned. The questionnaire was a researcher developed profoma titled IMIPD (influence of marital instability on psycho-sociocognitive development profoma). It consisted of five clusters that appraised the influence of marital instability on the psychological, social, cognitive, psychosocial and socio-cognitive developments of students from Anambra State Nigeria. The data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions.

Results

The data collected from the field of study were analyzed and the findings were presented in table form as follows:

Research Question 1: what is the influence of marital instability on the psychological development of secondary school students in Anambra State Nigeria?

Table 1: mean and standard deviation score on the influence of marital instability on the psychological developments of students.

S/N	Item Description on influence of marital instability on psychological development of adolescents	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
1	Contributes to your level of smartness	2.07	0.62	
2	Contributes to your level of calm	1.19	0.71	
3	Enables you appreciate your general appearance	2.23	0.69	
4	Impacts highly on your self esteem / sense of self	2.19	0.65	
5	Discuss sex issues with you	2.03	0.64	
6	Shows concern and interest about your future	2.19	0.59	
7	Helps you to acquire personal identity	2.26	0.73	
8	Helps you adapt to new images	2.09	0.71	
9	Contributes to your behavior stability	2.21	0.72	
10	Shows concerns to your worries	2.04	0.69	

n = 2000

The results in the table above indicates that all the items which assessed the influence of marital instability on the psychological development of secondary school students from

Anambra State were scored below the acceptable mean mark of 2.50, thereby indicating that marital instability affects the psychological wellbeing of the students.

Research Question 2: What is the influence of marital instability on the social development of secondary school students from Anambra State Nigeria?

Table 2: mean and standard deviation score on the influence of marital instability on social development of children.

S/N	Item Description on influence of marital instability on social development of children	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
1	Encourages social interactions	2.04	0.61	
2	Encourages dialogues	2.06	0.72	
3	Helps you develop interest in other persons	2.08	0.59	
4	Parents have good relationship with you	2.04	0.68	
5	Encourages you to bring your friends home	2.05	0.74	
6	Encourages you to participate in social events	1.07	0.62	
7	Encourages peer interactions	2.40	0.63	
8	Teaches you styles of verbal expression	2.06	0.72	
9	Supports you to organize social activities	2.09	0.71	
10	Celebrates your birthdays/anniversaries	2.42	0.74	

n = 2000

The results in the table above indicated that all the items that measured the influence of marital instability on the social development of secondary school students from Anambra State were scored below the acceptable mean mark indicating that marital instability hinders the proper social development of the children.

Research Question 3: what is the influence of marital instability on the cognitive development of secondary school students from Anambra State, Nigeria?

Table 3: mean and standard deviation score on the influence of marital instability on cognitive development of students.

S/N	Item Description on influence of marital instability on the cognitive development of students	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
1	Provision of necessary school materials	2.38	0.61	
2	Monitoring home work	2.14	0.67	
3	Assisting in doing assignment	2.20	0.65	
4	Prompt payment of necessary dues/fees	2.43	0.72	
5	Encourages visitation to counsellors	2.03	0.73	
6	Participation in PTA	2.32	0.72	
7	Encouraging extra lectures	2.19	0.59	
8	Encourages visits to areas of academic interest	2.20	0.62	
9	Provision of leisure reading materials	2.30	0.61	
10	Visitation to their class teacher	2.02	0.71	

n = 2000

The results from table three above revealed that the items measuring the influence of marital instability on the cognitive development of the children were all scored below the acceptable mean mark of 2.50 indicating that marital conflict had a great influence on the cognitive development of the same.

Research Question 4: What is the influence of marital instability on the psychosocial development of secondary school students in Anambra State?

Table 4: mean and standard deviation score on the influence of marital instability on the psychosocial development of students.

S/N	Item Description on influence of marital instability on the psychosocial development of students	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
1	Ability to participate in communal affairs	2.32	0.70	
2	Being at service to other people	2.40	0.63	
3	Your satisfaction with your appearance	2.36	0.63	
4	Your relationship with family members	2.09	0.72	
5	Contributes to your emotional stability	2.18	0.73	
6	Values attached to obedience and responsibility	2.26	0.74	
7	Values attached to customs and traditions	2.39	0.94	
8	Comportment to environmental tidiness	2.30	0.69	
9	Assists you to solve your problems	2.19	0.61	
10	Encourages sense of independence	2.42	0.62	
11	Helps appreciate changes occurring to your body	2.23	0.61	
12	Helps healthy self perception	2.16	0.62	
13	Enables you develop confidence in yourself	2.39	0.59	
14	Stable before the opposite sex	2.42	0.90	
15	Insistence on use of polite language	2.45	0.69	

n = 2000

The result from table four above indicated that all items measuring the influence of marital instability on the psychosocial development of the children were scored below 2.50, Hence revealing that marital instability impacts greatly the psychosocial development of the children.

Research Question 5: Influence of marital instability on the socio-cognitive development of secondary school students in Anambra state Nigeria.

Table 5: mean and standard deviation score on the influence of marital instability on the socio-cognitive development of students.

S/N	Item Description on influence of marital instability on the socio-cognitive development	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
1	Helping you discover new skills	2.14	0.69	
2	Giving help to make you an achiever	2.23	0.71	
3	Encouraging you to study hard	2.42	0.65	
4	Gives you incentives/motivations	2.09	0.63	
5	Encouraging extra lectures	2.32	0.61	
6	Assisting you towards having high goals	2.09	0.64	
7	Payment of necessary dues	2.40	0.62	
8	Provision of necessary school materials	2.16	0.72	
9	Monitoring home work and assignments	2.15	0.72	
10	Participation in P.T.A meeting	2.06	0.74	

n = 2000

The result from table five indicated that the items above were ruled below the acceptable mean score of 2.50 consequently indicating that marital instability frustrates the socio-cognitive development of secondary school children from Anambra State Nigeria.

Discussion of findings

The findings of the study was discussed in line with the purpose of study which sought to determine the influence of marital instability on the psychological, social, cognitive, psychosocial and socio-cognitive development of secondary school children from Anambra State Nigeria.

Concerning the influence of marital instability on the psychological development of secondary school children from Anambra State; the study investigated the extent marital instability hindered the achievement of the following, they include: behavior stability (2.21), shows concern to your worries and interest about the future (2.04) and (2.19) respectively helps you acquire personal identity (2.26) and new image (2.09), enables you appreciate your general appearance (2.43), discuss sex issues with you (2.03) etc. the results above revealed that all the items rating the influence of marital instability were scored below the mean impact mark (2.50) consequently indicating that marital instability hinders the psychological development of students from Anambra State.

On the social development, the students rated the social development variables with respect to the hindrances caused by marital instability as follows, social interaction (2.04), dialogues (2.06), interests in other persons (2.08) good relationship with parents (2.04) peer interaction (2.40) etc revealing that the students rated the influence of marital instability to be heavy on their social development. Concerning their cognitive development, it looked at those things the family provides to ensure both formal and non-formal supports towards the development of the children interestingly the students rated all of them to fall below the acceptable mean mark of (2.50). The psychosocial and socio-cognitive domains were similarly appraised to be poorly influenced by parents because of marital instability.

This in line with what literature had postulated. Cumming (2012), Melissa et al… (2016), Lesmin & Sarker (2014), Saker (2017) and Onyang (2014) all noted that conflicting homes constitute big hindrances toward the development of their children. Mellissa (2016) noted that parents in conflicting homes are indisposed towards their socialization roles consequently could lead to problematic behaviors such as poor cognitive development, social and emotional problems. This view was supported by Sarker (2014) who noted that conflicting families had very significant negative impact on the cognitive and psychosocial development of their children. In the words of Kelly (2012) interpersonal and conflicting marriages had great adverse effect on children and adolescents achievements.

Conclusion

In conclusion, in words of Onwuasoanya (2016) who rightly asserted that marital conflicted families and homes are characterized by strong features of maladjustment and poor socialization standards. The conflicts lead to instability in homes which affects not only the productivity of parents with respect to conjugal love but also their ability to contribute positively towards the raising, nurturing and socialization of their off-springs.

Recommendations

1. Proper understanding by parents that conflict is a reality in nature and therefore should be managed properly to avoid spilling into the parental family.
2. Proper marriage formation before joining together as husband and wife.
3. Seeking the assistance of marriage counsellors
4. Engaging in post marital instruction groups and organizations.
5. Stakeholders interaction through conferences and religious summits
6. Remedial programmes for children from unstable homes/families.

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