

PARENTAL MARITAL CRISIS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between parental marital crisis and psychological well-being of students in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a correlational research design. The population of study comprised all the 27,386 (13,331 males and 14,055 females) students in the 275 junior secondary schools in the 3 senatorial zones with the 23 Local Government Areas. A sample of 439 (225 males and 214 females) was drawn from 35 schools in 6 out of the 23 Local Government Areas. Multi-stage sampling approach involving Cluster, Stratified and Simple random sampling techniques were used. Two instruments titled Parental Crisis Scale (PCS) and Students' Psychological-Well Being Scale (SPWBS) were used for data collection. Face and content validities of the instruments were ensured by experts in the relevant areas. Reliability coefficients of 0.78 and 0.72 were obtained for Parental Crisis Scale (PCS) and Students' Psychological-Well Being Scale (SPWBS) through Cronbach Alpha technique. The research questions were answered using Pearson Product Moment statistics while the null hypotheses were tested with z-ratio at 0.05 alpha level of significance. It was found that there is a significant negative relationship among physical assault, economical, emotional crisis and students' psychological well-being. It was recommended among others that parents should develop self-regulation and self-control in dealing with marital matters of urgent importance in order not to allow them escalate.

Keywords: Parental Marital Crisis and psychological-well being

Introduction

Marriage is a legal union between a man and a woman that could be called husband and wife. Both are called husband and wife as they have been able to perform some basic requirements such as the payment of dowries and the necessary ceremonies. Olayinka as cited in Njoku (2008) sees marriage as a social institution for the union of a man and his wife in body and soul.

Marriage therefore fosters the coming together of two totally different individuals with their personality traits as husband and wife, to plan their future and set up their own family. Some of the couples go ahead to formalize their union in the churches, court of laws, mosques or in the community (traditional marriage). When the couple formalize their union in the church it is called Christian marriage or western marriage where the duo are knotted by an ordained man of God through the performance of biblical obligations, prayers and issuance of certificate of marriage. When a union is carried out in the law court, it is called court marriage. Court marriage permits the couple to swear an oath of allegiance to each other according to the dictates and provisions in the constitution after which a marriage certificate will be given to them. A marriage that is done under Islamic traditions and laws is tagged Islamic marriage.

In Islamic marriage, dowries are also paid and other rights performed accordingly. The purpose of the various forms of union is meant for couples to live in peace, procreate and explore their environment. Peace, procreation and exploration of the environment could only be achieved in an understanding home. Marriage is a challenging event. The road is not all roses. Hence, it is like a coin of two faces (Echebe, 2014). A crisis prone home may be haggling and battling with one form of crisis or another. Crisis is a situation whereby things are not working out well and there is no peace.

Homes evolve from marriages and marital crisis may often than not degenerate into separation, divorce, broken homes, single parenthood, non-parenthood, child abandonment, to list but some (Njoku, 2008). Marital crisis can range from a minor disagreement to a more inflicting one of quarreling, fighting, divorce, separation and death. In general, a child who is brought up in an environment where there is unity between the parents tends to do well in intelligence test-items that require degree thought (Njoku, 2008). Several factors have been adduced to be responsible for marital conflicts or crisis. These include: inadequate preparations for marriage, early marriage, dysfunctional communication, life change factors, psychological factors, ill health, infidelity, unrealistic expectations, lack of problem solving and conflict resolution skills, religious, cultural and educational differences, impotence/infertility, economic hardship, lack of mutual love, trust and openness, alcoholism and drug addiction and unnecessary interferences in marital affairs by parents, in-laws, friends and so called well wishers (Njoku, 2008). Marital crisis can take forms of physical assault, emotional crisis, economic crisis and sexual abuse/conflict etc. Because of the levels of people who are under investigation, Junior Secondary School Students (JSSS) the

researcher has looked at physical assaults, emotional and economic crisis in the home as they affect the psychological well-being of the students.

Physical assault is one of the signs of marriage unrests. It is the activities of the couples that results into physical bruises, injury, wound, squeezing, pulling, pushing, hooking, kicking, slapping and hitting. Udoh (2016) saw marriage physical conflict as the unruly activities where the couple(s) engage each other in physical molestation and maltreatment. Several factors may be responsible for physical assaults in marriage such as emotional immaturity, financial immaturity, economic immaturity, spiritual immaturity as well as environmental insensitivity among the couples (Amaeze, 2017). Physical assault in the home may result into broken bones, head injuries and other body wounds. Students who are prone to experiencing physical abuse, torture and humiliation will likely develop into fear of unknown and may begin to experience ill feelings in situations around them. Physical assaults among parents in the home may harden the hearts and minds of the children thereby making them not to be emotional. Ade (2014) empirically reviewed that open physical assaults in the family results to children's' psychological problems. In the same line of thought, Adams (2017) reported that students from fighting prone parents tend to be hostile and unaccommodating.

Another form of marital crisis is when couple(s) is emotionally tortured, tormented or abused. When a spouse is emotionally tortured by the other spouse, such suffers from emotional conflict. Emotional conflict is a type of marital instability that has to do with the subjection of a partner to ill-feelings, regrets, neglects, and as well making the victim to be incommunicado (Abiodun, 2016). Kelly and Manza (2013) recorded that depression, emotional insecurity, and mental health disorder can follow due to traumatic experience. Emotional conflict is marred with traumatizing, debilitating and devastating feelings on the individuals. When parents are emotionally unstable, they may not be able to effectively and efficiently repose on their children the quantum of care and attention needed for them to be emotional balanced. Emotional problems in the home may likely end-up in influencing the children in becoming aggressive, moody, as well as not having relaxed mind in the home. This may make them to form peer groups or make friends that can attend to their emotional yearnings and demands. Mohamed (2017) found that parental emotional deprivation practices have a strong negative relationship with the well being of their children. More to this, was the findings of Yusuf (2013) who documented that emotional crises and abuses in the family by spouse initiate their children into unruly behaviour.

The last of parental/marital crisis considered here is economic crisis. Economic crisis has to do with financial and material tussles in the family.

When one spouse who is the bread winner of the family decides to subject everybody in the family into his or dictates against their won will and wishes, then it becomes economic deprivations. It is reported that marriage victims face financial difficulties during the period of violence especially, when they don't have personal source of income (Sabastine, 2007). Economic crisis arises when there is deprivation and under provision of provision of food stuff, cloths and money for miscellaneous use in the family. Okechukwu (2009) reported that economic starvation in the family brings about students emotional tantrum with slightest provocations. In the same light, Obiagwu (2013) found that the quest for material resources in the families has endangered the psychological development of their children.

Psychological well-being is a condition of an individual's stable emotional disposition to self and other people within his or her reach. Dodd (2009) warned that some behavioural and emotional problems that can result due to domestic violence include increased anxiety, aggressiveness, and changes in how a child socializes with family, friends and authorities. Some psychological factors like spouse's personality, incompatibility, psychological abnormality, maladjustment, and other psycho-sexual problems in marriages can have significant effect on the life of their children(Njoku,2008).

Statement of the Problem

Some secondary schools students are replete with unruly behaviours. This is evidential in the types of unethical and antisocial behaviours among them. The case of students in secondary schools in Rivers State may not be an exemption. Some of these students may have inter and intra personal relationship as can be seen in their hostility. Family instability may deprive parents the opportunities as well as making them not to have proper frame of mind to give adequate attention and care to their children. Students who do not have psychological well-being would be grappling with the problem of lack of concentration in the classroom.

In the recent past, reports about matrimonial crisis and abuse in the churches, newspapers, customary courts and in the social media have suggested the fact that majority of the homes are under serious spell. The researchers are however not certain about the nature of relationship that might be existing between parental marital crisis and the psychological wellbeing of their children. In view of this, the following question was asked: What is the relationship between parental physical assault, emotional and economic crisis and psychological well-being of secondary school students. Based on this main objective, the following specific objectives were generated to:

1. Establish the relationship between parental physical assault and students' psychological well-being in secondary schools in Rivers State.
2. Determine the relationship between parental emotional crisis and students' psychological well-being in secondary schools in Rivers State.
3. Ascertain the relationship between parental economic crisis and students' psychological well-being in secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in this study.

1. What is the relationship between parental physical assault and students' psychological well-being in secondary schools in Rivers State?
2. What is the relationship between parental emotional crisis and students' psychological well-being in secondary schools in Rivers State?
3. What is the relationship between parental economic crisis and students' psychological well-being in secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

1. Parental physical assault does not significantly relate to students' psychological well-being.
2. There is no significant relationship between parental emotional crisis and students' psychological well-being.
3. There is no significant relationship between parental economic crisis and students' psychological well-being.

Method

The study adopted a correlational research design. Correlational design was used to determine the relationship between parental marital crisis and student's psychological well being. This design was considered appropriate because it sought to establish the relationship that existed between two or more variables as indicated by the direction and magnitude of the relationship, whether positive or negative (Nworgu, 2006 & Ukwuije, 2003). The population of the study comprised all the 27,386 (13,331 males and 14,055 females) students in the 275 public junior secondary schools in the 3

senatorial zones of Rivers state with 23 Local Government Areas. The sample size of the study comprised 439 (225 males and 214 females) public junior secondary school students one (JSSI) drawn from 35 schools in 6 sampled Local Government Areas in Rivers State, Nigeria. The multi-stage sampling approach was used to arrive at the various sub-units of the population. The schools were clustered into 3 senatorial zones and 23 Local Government Areas. 40% of the 23 L.G.As gave 6 L.G.As, with the constituent 35 schools and 3,652 (1,871 male and 1,781 female) students using stratified random sampling technique. Finally, the stratified random sampling technique using 12% was used to draw the sample size of 439 (225 males and 214 females) students from 3,652 (1,871 males and 1,781 females) students. Two instruments titled Parental Crisis Scale (PCS) and Students Psychological-Well Being Scale (SPWBS) were used for data collection. The PCS has three sub-sections. The first sub-section contained 11 items to elicit responses on physical assault, the second sub-scale contains 10 items on economic crisis while the last sub-section has 13 items on psychological crisis respectively.

The instrument SPWBS contains 16 items used to measure psychological well-being of students. Face and content validities of the instruments were ensured by experts in the relevant areas. Reliability coefficients of 0.78 and 0.72 were obtained for Parental Crisis Scale (PCS) and Students Psychological-Well Being Scale (SPWBS) through Cronbach Alpha technique. The research questions were answered with Pearson Product Moment statistics while the null hypotheses were tested with z-test at an alpha 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The results of the study are presented in the Tables below.

Research Question One: What is the relationship between parental physical assault and students' psychological well-being in secondary schools in Rivers state?

Hypothesis One:

Parental physical assault does not significantly relate with students' psychological well-being.

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment calculation on the relationship between physical assault and psychological well-being

Categories	n	r	z-ratio	z-crit.	Decision
Physical assault Psychological well-being	439	-0.89	20.00	1.96	Significant High relationship
P < 0.05					

Table 1 revealed that the r value was -0.89 which implies a negative relationship between physical assault among parents and psychological well-being of secondary school students in Rivers State. The result depicts the fact that an increase in independent variable (physical assault) leads to a decrease of the dependent variable (psychological well-being). The hypothesis showed that the z-value of 20.00 was greater than the critical z-value of 1.96. By implication, there is a significant negative relationship between physical assault among parents and psychological well-being of students in secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Question Two

How does parental emotional crisis relate to students' psychological well-being in secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant relationship between parental emotional crisis and students' psychological well-being.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment calculation on the relationship between emotional crisis and psychological well-being of students

Categories	n	r	z-value	z-critical.	Decision
Emotional crisis Psychological well-being	439	-0.73	11.01	1.96	Significant high relationship
P < 0.05					

Table 2 revealed that the r-value was -0.73 which implies a negative relationship between emotional crisis among parents and psychological well-being of secondary school students in Rivers State. The result depicts the fact that an increase in independent variable (emotional crisis) leads to a decrease of the dependent variable (psychological well-being). The hypothesis showed

that the z-value of 11.01 was greater than the critical z-value of 1.96. By implication, there is a significant negative relationship between emotional crisis among parents and psychological well-being of students in secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Question Three

What is the relationship between parental economic crisis and students’ psychological well-being in secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypothesis Three

There is no significant relationship between parental economic crisis and students’ psychological well-being.

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment calculation on the relationship between economic crisis and psychological well-being of students

Categories	n	r	z-value	z-crit.	Decision
Economic crisis Psychological well-being	439	-0.91	9.00	1.96	Significant high negative relationship

P<0.05

Table 3 revealed that the r-value was -0.91 which implies a negative relationship between economic crisis among parents and psychological well-being of secondary school students in Rivers State. The result depicts the fact that an increase in independent variable (economic crisis) leads to a decrease of the dependent variable (psychological well-being). The hypothesis showed that the z-value of 9.00 was greater than the critical z- value of 1.96. By implication, there is a negative significant relationship between economic crisis among parents and psychological well-being of students in secondary schools in Rivers state.

Summary of Findings

The findings of the study are summarized as shown below:

1. There is a significant negative relationship between parental physical assault and psychological-well being of students.
2. There is a significant negative relationship between parental emotional crisis and psychological-well being of students.
3. There is a significant negative relationship between parental economic crisis and psychological-well being of students.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study are discussed as presented below.

Parental Physical Assaults and Psychological-Well Being of Students

The study revealed that there is a negative significant relationship between parental physical assault and psychological-well being of students in secondary schools in Rivers State. The possible reason for this finding is not far from the fact that the students learn from what they see. If the parents are in constant fighting and quarreling in the presence of their children, the tendency of this children becoming aggressive and hostile to people and to themselves may not be inevitable. Children are supposed to be trained in a conducive environment where the reverse becomes the case they have behavioural problems. The study agrees with Ade (2014) who empirically found that open physical assaults in the family results to children's' psychological problems. In the same line of thought, Adams (2017) reported that students from fighting prone parents tended to be hostile and unaccommodating. Therefore the research has established that increase in parental physical assaults reduce students' psychological well-being.

Parental Emotional Crisis and Psychological-Well Being of Students

There is a negative significant relationship between parental emotional crisis and psychological well-being of students in secondary schools in Rivers state. It takes somebody with the right frame of mind to handle sensitive issues like emotional problems. Spouse emotional torture and torment can go a long way to distort the family mood and circle. Children who are victims of emotional upset and abuse may be grappling with lack of love and care, as a result may indulge in deviant behaviours inimical to their environment and the society in general. The finding of this study agreed with that of Mohamed (2017) who found that spousal emotional deprivation practices have a strong negative relationship with the well being of their children. More to this, were the findings of Yusuf (2013) who documented that emotional crises and abuses in the family by spouses initiate their children into unruly behaviours. It is worthy to note that parental emotional conflict undermines the psychological well-being of their children.

Parental Economic Crisis and Psychological-Well Being of Students

There is a negative significant relationship between parental economic crisis and psychological-well being of students in secondary schools in Rivers State. Finance is very important in all spheres of life. It is believed that lack of finance will affect the smooth running of the family. Finance is needed to pay

school fees, house rents, buy clothes, buy foods, and as well as to take care of medical bills. A family that is having financial challenges and conflicts may not be able to take care of the family's responsibilities thereby exposing the children to the dangers of moving about for one form of assistance or the other. This study agrees with Okechukwu (2009) who found that economic starvation in the family brings about students emotional tantrum in their slightest provocations. In the same light, Obiagwu (2013) found that the cravings for material resources by couples have endangered the psychological development of their children which in turn affects their psychological well-being.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that there is significant negative relationship between parental marital crisis(physical assaults, emotional crisis, economic crisis) and psychological stability and well-being of junior secondary school students in Rivers state, Nigeria.

Recommendations

The study recommended that:

1. Parents should develop self-regulation and self-control in dealing with marital matters as to avoid physical assaults that may influence the children's psychological well-being negatively.
2. Since there are bound to be misunderstandings at times in marriage, parents should learn how to remain calm in the face of serious marital issues and admonish each other when they are in their right mood and are emotionally stable and avoid their children's exposure to such confrontations. More so, they should avoid keeping malice with each other and try to settle issues before they degenerate into emotional torture and abuse, distorting the family mood and affecting the children negatively.
3. Since economic conflict affects the psychological well-being of the students, parents should avoid financial and material starvation which could be detrimental to the smooth running of the family.

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