



Staff marital discord and basic science academic performance of secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined the influence of marital discord on the academic performance of secondary school students in Basic Science in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria. Two research questions and two hypotheses were used for the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population comprised 1,120 Junior Secondary School III students in selected secondary schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. A sample was selected using simple random sampling technique. Data were collected using a researcher- questionnaire. The instrument was validated by experts in Science Education and Measurement and Evaluation, while its reliability was established through Cronbach Alpha reliability method which yielded 0.79 reliability coefficient. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while independent samples t-test and Analysis of Variance were used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that religious-related marital discord had limited perceived influence on students' academic performance, while family financial problems arising from parental marital discord also showed limited influence based on students' responses. However, inferential analysis indicated that both religious-related marital discord and family financial problems significantly influenced students' academic performance in Basic Science. Based on the findings, it was recommended that parents should promote religious tolerance, effective communication and sound financial management practices to reduce marital conflicts and create supportive home environments that enhance students' academic achievement.

Keywords: Marital discord, religious conflict, family financial problems, academic performance, basic science, secondary school students

Introduction

The family is the first and most important social institution where children acquire the values, attitudes and behaviours required for effective participation in society. It consists of individuals connected through marriage, blood relationship or adoption and provides the immediate environment in which children receive care, protection, guidance and socialization (Collins *et al.*, 2000; Berk, 2018) [5, 9]. In the family, children develop emotional security, moral values, communication skills and learning habits that influence their overall development. Parents perform important responsibilities that include child upbringing, economic provision, emotional support and educational guidance. The quality of interaction among family members therefore has important implications for children's emotional well-being and educational development (Santrock, 2021) [29]. A peaceful home environment promotes confidence, emotional stability and positive attitudes toward learning, whereas persistent disagreements between parents may create conditions that interfere with children's academic progress (Cummings & Davies, 2010; Harold & Sellers, 2018) [13, 20]. Marriage provides the foundation upon which family life is established and sustained. It is generally recognized as a socially and legally accepted union between a mature man and woman who voluntarily agree to live together, provide mutual support and raise children in accepted cultural, religious and legal norms (Bhattarai *et al.*, 2015 [6]; John,

2021). Marriage is expected to provide companionship, cooperation, security and a stable environment that enables parents to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Where mutual respect, trust and effective communication exist, parents are more likely to provide children with adequate supervision, emotional support and encouragement that promote academic success. However, increasing economic pressures, changing social conditions and personal differences have contributed to a rise in marital disagreements, raising concerns about their implications for children's educational development.

Marital discord refers to persistent disagreement, conflict and tension between married partners that disrupt the stability of family life. Unlike occasional misunderstandings that are common in marriage, marital discord involves repeated arguments, poor communication, emotional withdrawal, hostility, verbal abuse, physical violence and unresolved disagreements over family responsibilities. Where these conditions persist, they may result in separation, divorce or an unhealthy home environment characterized by fear and emotional insecurity. Children who grow up under such circumstances may experience anxiety, sadness, emotional distress and reduced psychological stability. These experiences may influence their behaviour, relationships with others and willingness to participate actively in school activities. Kinanee (2018) [22] observed that children exposed to persistent parental conflict

often experience psychological difficulties capable of reducing their academic engagement and classroom participation.

Several factors contribute to marital discord among couples. Financial hardship remains one of the most common causes because inadequate income may prevent families from meeting household responsibilities and providing children's educational needs (Conger & Donnellan, 2007) ^[10]. Other contributing factors include poor communication, infidelity, domestic violence, infertility, interference from extended family members, religious differences, sexual dissatisfaction, substance abuse and differences in personal expectations. When these challenges are poorly managed, disagreements between spouses may become frequent and intense, creating an unhealthy family atmosphere. Such conditions may reduce parental involvement in children's education, weaken emotional support and expose children to experiences that adversely affect their learning behaviour and educational aspirations.

Academic performance refers to the level of success achieved by students in educational activities as measured through examinations, tests, assignments, practical exercises and classroom participation. It reflects the extent to which learners have acquired the knowledge, skills and competencies expected after instruction. Adewale (2003) ^[1] explained that academic performance represents students' progress in learning activities and their ability to demonstrate acquired knowledge. Donald and Mary (1999) ^[15] described it as the expression of learning through activities that enable students to demonstrate understanding and competence. Students' academic achievement is influenced by several factors, including teaching quality, instructional materials, school facilities, students' motivation, parental involvement and the emotional climate in the home. The home environment plays a significant role in determining students' readiness to learn and participate effectively in academic activities. Parents who maintain stable marital relationships are generally better able to supervise homework, provide educational resources, encourage regular school attendance and create conditions that support learning (Epstein, 2011) ^[17]. In contrast, persistent conflict between spouses may reduce parental attention to children's educational needs and expose learners to emotional difficulties that interfere with concentration, motivation and classroom participation. Consequently, family relationships have become an important area of interest in educational research because children's learning experiences extend beyond the school to the home environment.

Previous studies showed that family stability contributes positively to students' educational achievement, whereas marital conflict, separation and divorce may undermine children's academic development (Amato, 2005; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Egunsola, 2014) ^[3, 16, 23]. Stable homes are often associated with greater parental involvement, effective supervision and stronger emotional support, while unstable homes expose children to emotional distress, reduced parental attention and limited educational assistance. Studies have also shown that continuous exposure to parental disagreements may lead to anxiety, depression, poor concentration and reduced classroom participation, thereby affecting students' ability to complete academic tasks successfully. Domestic violence, ineffective

communication, financial hardship and parental separation have equally been identified as family conditions capable of influencing students' educational outcomes (Aguboshim, 2021; Oyeromi *et al.*, 2018; Chukwu, 2025; Onyela *et al.*, 2025; Wami *et al.*, 2025) ^[2, 7, 26, 27, 32]. Although these studies have established a relationship between family instability and students' academic performance, much of the available evidence has focused on general academic achievement, other school subjects or different geographical locations.

Basic Science occupies an important position in the Nigerian secondary school curriculum because it introduces students to the fundamental principles of science and provides the foundation for further studies in Biology, Chemistry, Physics and other science-related disciplines. The subject develops scientific inquiry, critical thinking and problem-solving skills required for technological advancement and national development. Despite its importance, students' performance in Basic Science has continued to generate concern among teachers, parents and education stakeholders. Poor achievement has been associated with factors such as ineffective teaching methods, inadequate instructional materials, poor learning facilities, students' attitudes toward science and insufficient parental support. Since effective learning depends not only on school factors but also on emotional stability in the home, marital discord may constitute an important factor influencing students' performance in the subject.

Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State has experienced rapid urbanization, population growth and changing family structures associated with increasing social and economic pressures (Daodu, 2021 ^[14], Mgbomo *et al.*, 2024). These developments have created conditions in which many families experience marital disagreements that may affect children's educational experiences. While considerable attention has been given to school-related factors affecting students' academic performance, relatively little attention has been directed towards understanding how marital discord in families influences students' academic performance in Basic Science in the study area. This gap provides the justification for the present study. Therefore, this study examines the influence of marital discord on the academic performance of secondary school students in Basic Science in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

Academic performance in Basic Science among secondary school students has remained a major concern to parents, teachers, school administrators and other education stakeholders in Nigeria. As a foundation subject for science education, Basic Science equips students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for further studies in Biology, Chemistry, Physics and other science-related disciplines. Despite the introduction of improved teaching methods, curriculum reforms and government interventions aimed at enhancing science education, many students continue to perform below expectation in the subject (FRN, 2014; NERDC, 2022; WAEC, 2023). While inadequate instructional materials, ineffective teaching methods and poor learning facilities have frequently been identified as factors associated with this challenge, conditions in the family environment may also influence students' academic performance (Epstein, 2011) ^[17]. A stable family

environment provides children with emotional security, parental guidance, motivation and educational support that encourage effective learning (Berk, 2018) ^[5]. In contrast, persistent marital discord may create an atmosphere of fear, anxiety and emotional instability capable of reducing students' concentration, classroom participation and commitment to academic activities (Harold & Sellers, 2018) ^[20].

Available studies Indicates that family instability, including parental conflict, domestic violence, poor communication, separation and divorce, may expose children to psychological and emotional challenges that interfere with their educational development (Aguboshim, 2021; Chukwu, 2025; Onyela *et al.*, 2025; Oyeromi *et al.*, 2018; Wami *et al.*, 2025) ^[2, 7, 26, 27, 32]. These family conditions may weaken parental involvement in children's education and limit the support required for satisfactory academic achievement (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994) ^[23]. Although previous studies have established a relationship between students' academic performance on general academic achievement, different school subjects or locations in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State (Daodu, 2021 ^[14], Anyanwu, 2023 ^[4], Mgbomo *et al.*, 2024). Consequently, there is limited empirical evidence on the extent to which marital discord influences secondary school students' academic performance in Basic Science (Cummings & Davies, 2010) ^[13]. The problem of this study, therefore, is that while poor academic performance in Basic Science continues to attract considerable attention, the influence of marital discord on students' achievement in the subject remains insufficiently understood in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. It is against this background that this study examines the influence of marital discord on the academic performance of secondary school students in Basic Science in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Purpose of the Study

The study seeks to:

1. examine the influence of religious-related marital discord among couples on the academic performance of secondary school students in Basic Science in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.
2. determine the influence of family financial problems arising from parental marital discord on the academic performance of secondary school students in Basic Science in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does religious-related marital discord among couples influence the academic performance of secondary school students in Basic Science in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area?
2. To what extent do family financial problems arising from parental marital discord influence the academic performance of secondary school students in Basic Science in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

H01: Religious-related marital discord among couples has no significant influence on the academic performance of

secondary school students in Basic Science in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

H02: Family financial problems arising from parental marital discord have no significant influence on the academic performance of secondary school students in Basic Science in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

Review of Related Empirical Studies

Onyela *et al.* (2025) ^[26] examined marital conflict factors and students' academic performance in public junior secondary schools in Alimosho Local Government Area, Lagos State. Using a descriptive survey design, the study found that domestic violence, poor communication, and family-related problems contributed to marital discord, which affected students' emotional wellbeing and academic performance. The study is relevant to the present research because it shows that family conflicts resulting from marital disagreements influence students' academic outcomes. However, the present study focuses on specific causes of marital discord, including religious-related conflicts and family financial problems, among secondary school students in Basic Science in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State. Aguboshim (2021) ^[2] studied the influence of parents' marital status on students' academic performance in Information Technology subjects among senior secondary school students in Enugu State. The findings revealed that students from stable marital homes performed better than those from divorced or separated homes due to differences in parental support and involvement. The study relates to the present research because it establishes that marital instability affects students' academic achievement. However, the present study examines how religious-related disagreements and financial problems associated with marital discord influence students' performance in Basic Science.

Oyeromi *et al.* (2018) ^[27] examined the effect of marital stability and divorce on adolescent students' academic performance in senior secondary schools in Ogun State. The findings showed that marital crises and divorce negatively affected students' academic achievement by disrupting the supportive home environment required for learning. The study supports the present research by demonstrating the relationship between marital challenges and students' educational outcomes. However, the present study focuses on religious-related marital discord and family financial problems as specific factors influencing students' academic performance in Basic Science. Chukwu (2025) ^[7] reviewed the influence of marital instability on students' academic performance in Nigerian universities. The study found that unstable marital relationships contributed to psychological challenges that reduced students' concentration and motivation for learning. The study is relevant because it explains how marital problems may affect academic achievement through emotional difficulties. However, the present study differs by examining secondary school students and focusing on religious and financial factors associated with marital discord.

Wami *et al.* (2025) ^[32] studied marital conflicts and academic performance among secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State. The findings revealed that parental violence, low socio-economic conditions, and parental separation contributed to poor academic performance among students. The study is closely

related to the present research because it was conducted in Rivers State and confirms the effect of marital conflict on students' academic outcomes. However, the present study examines the influence of religious-related marital discord and family financial problems on students' performance in Basic Science in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to collect information from respondents and describe the influence of marital discord on the academic performance of secondary school students in Basic Science without manipulating any variable. The survey design allowed the researcher to obtain data directly from students through a structured questionnaire, which provided the basis for analysis and interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Cohen *et al.*, 2018; Nworgu, 2015) ^[11, 25]. The study was carried out in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria. Obio/Akpor is one of the Local Government Areas in Rivers State and forms part of the Port Harcourt metropolitan area (Anyanwu, 2023) ^[4]. The area consists of several communities with public and private secondary schools where students experience different family and social conditions. The location was considered suitable for the study because of the need to examine how marital discord influences students' academic performance in Basic Science in the area.

The population of the study comprised Junior Secondary School III (JSS III) students in selected secondary schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. The selected schools included Comprehensive Secondary School, Mgbuoshimini; AFMUC International Missionary School, Aker Junction; Community Secondary School, Rumuolumeni and Worthy Brain International School. The total population of the study was 1,120 students based on records obtained by the researcher from the selected schools. A sample of 256 students was selected from the population using a simple random sampling technique (Cohen *et al.*, 2018) ^[8]. The technique gave students equal opportunity of being selected for participation in the study. The sampling procedure ensured that the respondents represented students from the selected schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. The instrument used for data collection was a researcher-developed questionnaire titled "Marital Discord and

Academic Performance Questionnaire (MDAPQ)." The questionnaire consisted of sections designed to obtain information on respondents' demographic characteristics, religious-related marital discord, family financial problems associated with marital discord, and students' academic performance in Basic Science. The items were structured using a four-point Likert scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE), and Very Low Extent (VLE).

The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by experts in Science Education and Measurement and Evaluation. The experts examined the items to ensure that they adequately covered the objectives of the study and measured the variables under investigation. Their corrections and suggestions were incorporated into the final version of the instrument before administration. The reliability of the instrument was established through a pilot test conducted among students outside the study area. The responses obtained from the pilot test were analysed using Cronbach Alpha reliability method to determine the internal consistency of the questionnaire items which yielded 0.79 reliability index. The reliability coefficient obtained indicated that the instrument was suitable for data collection (Cronbach, 1951; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011) ^[12, 30].

The researcher personally administered the questionnaires to the selected students with the assistance of trained research assistants. Permission was obtained from the school authorities before the administration of the instrument. The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents, and completed copies of the questionnaire were collected for analysis. The data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions (Pallant, 2020) ^[28]. Independent samples t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The hypotheses were rejected where the probability value was less than 0.05 and retained where the probability value was greater than 0.05 (Field, 2018) ^[19].

Presentation and Analysis of Results

Research Question 1: To what extent does religious-related marital discord among couples influence the academic performance of secondary school students in Basic Science in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area?

Table 1: Parental religious-related marital discord among couples influences the academic performance of secondary school students in Basic Science.

S/N	Items Statement	X(SA/A)	Y(D/SD)	X ²	Y ²	XY
1.	Being members of different religions makes my parents face marital discords.	100	156	10,000	24336	15600
2.	Being members of different religions does not cause marital discords in my family.	130	126	16,900	15876	16380
3.	In my family, religious intolerance has caused quarrels and other discords.	90	166	8,100	27556	14940
4.	There is discords generalization to my academic due to religious differences.	80	176	6,400	30976	14080
5.	My parents, who are committed to their religious activities, have disagreed on how I should grow academically	95	161	9,025	25921	15295
	Total	495	785	50425	124665	76295

Table 1 presented the responses on the extent to which religious-related marital discord among couples influenced the academic performance of secondary school students in Basic Science in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. The results showed that 100 respondents agreed that being members of different religions made their parents experience marital discord, while 156 disagreed. Also, 130

respondents agreed that being members of different religions did not cause marital discord in their families, while 126 disagreed. On whether religious intolerance caused quarrels and other forms of discord in the family, 90 respondents agreed, whereas 166 disagreed. Similarly, 80 respondents agreed that religious differences had affected their academic performance, while 176 disagreed. Lastly, 95

respondents agreed that their parents' commitment to religious activities had led to disagreements concerning their academic upbringing, whereas 161 disagreed. The aggregate responses indicated that 495 respondents agreed with the statements, while 785 disagreed. This suggested that a larger proportion of the students did not perceive religious-related

marital discord as having a strong influence on their academic performance in Basic Science.

Research Question 2: To what extent do family financial problems arising from parental marital discord influence the academic performance of secondary school students in Basic Science in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area?

Table 2: Family financial problems arising from parental marital discord influence the academic performance of secondary school students in Basic Science

S/N	Items Statement	X(SA/A)	Y(D/SD)	X ²	Y ²	XY
1.	Inadequate fund to meet family demands in my family brings about my poor performance in academic.	118	138	13924	19044	16284
2.	The lack of finance to pay for my academic needs affects my performance adversely.	140	116	19600	13456	16240
3.	My parents and I manage available funds to meet our demands; hence, no crises in my academic pursuits.	106	150	11236	22500	15900
4.	Although there is much money for my family upkeep, there are still marital discords affecting my academics.	121	135	14641	18225	16335
5.	Availability of funds in the family influences my academic performance.	142	114	20164	12996	16188
	Total	627	653	79565	86221	80947

Table 2 presented the responses on the extent to which family financial problems arising from parental marital discord influenced the academic performance of secondary school students in Basic Science in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. The results showed that 118 respondents agreed that inadequate funds to meet family demands contributed to their poor academic performance, while 138 disagreed. Also, 140 respondents agreed that lack of finance to meet their academic needs adversely affected their performance, whereas 116 disagreed. On whether effective management of available family funds prevented crises that affected academic pursuits, 106 respondents agreed, while 150 disagreed. Similarly, 121 respondents agreed that marital discord still existed despite adequate family income and affected their academic performance, whereas 135 disagreed. Finally, 142

respondents agreed that the availability of family funds influenced their academic performance, while 114 disagreed. The aggregate responses showed that 627 respondents agreed with the statements, while 653 disagreed. This indicated that although many respondents acknowledged that family financial resources influenced academic performance, the overall responses suggested that family financial problems arising from parental marital discord exerted only a limited influence on the academic performance of secondary school students in Basic Science in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

H₀₁: Religious-related marital discord among couples has no significant influence on the academic performance of secondary school students in Basic Science in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and t-test on the Scores response of students with family religious discord and those without family religious discord.

S/N	Items Statement	X(SA/A)	Y(D/SD)	X ²	Y ²	XY	r	df	t-cal	t _{cri}	Decision
1.	Being members of different religion make my parents face marital discords	100	156	10,000	24,336	15,600					
2.	Being members of different religion does not cause marital discords in my family	130	126	16,900	15,876	16,380					
3.	In my family, religious intolerance has cause quarrels and other discords	90	166	8,100	27,556	14,940	-1	254	-11.27	1.80	Accepted
4.	There is discords generalization to my academic due to religious differences	80	176	6,400	30,976	14,080					
5.	My parents who are committed to their religious activities have disagreed how I should grow academically	95	161	9,025	25,921	15,295					
	Total	495	785	50425	124665	76295					

Table 3 presented the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and t-test analysis of the relationship between religious-related marital discord among couples and the academic performance of secondary school students in Basic Science in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. The analysis yielded a correlation coefficient of $r = -1.00$ with 254 degrees of freedom, a calculated t-value of -11.27, and a critical t-value of 1.80 at the 0.05 level of significance. Since the absolute calculated t-value (11.27) was greater

than the critical t-value (1.80), the null hypothesis should have been rejected, indicating that religious-related marital discord among couples had a significant influence on the academic performance of secondary school students in Basic Science in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. The decision recorded in the table as "Accepted" was inconsistent with the reported statistical values. If the intention was to accept the null hypothesis, the values of r and t -cal would need to be recalculated.

H₀₂: Family financial problems arising from parental marital discord have no significant influence on the academic

performance of secondary school students in Basic Science in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and t-test on family finance as a cause of parental marital discords influences my academic performance.

S/N	Items	X(SA/A)	Y(D/SD)	X ²	Y ²	XY	r	df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
1.	Inadequate fund to meet family demands in my family brings about my poor performance in academic.	118	138	13924	19044	16284					
2.	The lack of finance to pay for my academic needs affect my performance adversely.	140	116	19600	13456	16240					
3.	My parents and I manage available fund to meet our demands, hence no crises in my academic pursuits.	106	150	11236	22500	15900	-1	254	-11.27	1.80	Accepted
4.	Although there is much money for my family upkeep, there are still marital discords affecting my academics.	121	135	14641	18225	16335					
5.	Availability of funds in the family influences my academic performance.	142	114	20164	12996	16188					
	Total	627	653	79565	86221	80947					

Table 4 presented the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and t-test analysis of the relationship between family financial problems arising from parental marital discord and the academic performance of secondary school students in Basic Science in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. The analysis yielded a correlation coefficient of $r = -1.00$ with 254 degrees of freedom, a calculated t-value of -11.27, and a critical t-value of 1.80 at the 0.05 level of significance. Since the absolute calculated t-value (11.27) was greater than the critical t-value (1.80), the null hypothesis should have been rejected, indicating that family financial problems arising from parental marital discord had a significant influence on the academic performance of secondary school students in Basic Science in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. The decision recorded in the table as "Accepted" was inconsistent with the reported statistical values. If the intention was to accept the null hypothesis, the values of r and t-cal would need to be recalculated.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of Research Question 1 revealed that religious-related marital discord among couples had limited influence on the academic performance of secondary school students in Basic Science in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, as most respondents disagreed that religious differences, intolerance, and parents' religious commitments affected their academic activities. This finding indicates that although religious disagreements may occur in some families, they may not always disrupt students' learning outcomes. The finding agrees with Onyela *et al.* (2025) and Chukwu (2025) ^[7, 26], who reported that marital conflicts can affect students' emotional wellbeing and academic performance. However, it differs from Wami *et al.* (2025), Aguboshim (2021), and Oyeromi *et al.* (2018) ^[2, 27, 32], who found that family instability and marital crises significantly affected students' academic achievement. The difference may be due to the fact that religious-related disagreements may have less impact on students' educational experiences compared with severe forms of marital instability such as violence, separation, or divorce.

The finding of Research Question 2 revealed that family financial problems arising from parental marital discord had limited influence on the academic performance of secondary school students in Basic Science in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, as the responses showed only a slight difference between students who agreed and disagreed with the statements. This suggests that although inadequate

financial support and difficulties in meeting educational needs may affect students' learning experiences, financial challenges associated with marital discord may not be the major factor determining students' academic performance. The finding agrees with Onyela *et al.* (2025) and Wami *et al.* (2025) ^[26, 32], who identified family-related problems and socio-economic conditions as factors capable of affecting students' academic outcomes. However, it differs from Aguboshim (2021) and Oyeromi *et al.* (2018) ^[2, 27], who reported that unstable family conditions reduce parental support and negatively affect students' achievement. The difference may be attributed to variations in students' coping abilities, parental support systems, and the specific nature of financial challenges experienced by families in the study areas.

The finding of Hypothesis 1 revealed that religious-related marital discord among couples had a significant influence on the academic performance of secondary school students in Basic Science in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. This implies that disagreements arising from religious differences, intolerance, and conflicting religious expectations in families may affect students' educational experiences. The finding supports Onyela *et al.* (2025) ^[26], who found that marital conflicts resulting from family-related problems and poor communication influence students' emotional wellbeing and academic performance. It also agrees with Chukwu (2025) ^[7], who reported that marital instability affects students' concentration and motivation through psychological challenges. However, the finding differs from the descriptive result of the present study, which showed that many students did not perceive religious-related marital discord as having a strong influence on their academic performance. The difference may be explained by the inferential analysis, which indicates that even when students do not strongly recognize the effect, religious-related conflicts in the family may still contribute significantly to variations in academic outcomes.

The finding of Hypothesis 2 revealed that family financial problems arising from parental marital discord had a significant influence on the academic performance of secondary school students in Basic Science in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. This indicates that inadequate financial support, difficulty in meeting educational needs, and economic challenges associated with marital conflicts may affect students' academic experiences. The finding agrees with Wami *et al.* (2025) ^[32], who reported that low socio-economic conditions and marital conflicts contributed

to poor academic performance among secondary school students in Rivers State. It also supports Onyela *et al.* (2025)^[26], who identified family-related problems as factors capable of influencing students' academic outcomes. However, the finding differs from the descriptive result of the present study, where students showed only a limited perception of the influence of family financial problems on their academic performance. This difference suggests that although students may not always directly associate financial difficulties with their academic challenges, the statistical analysis indicates that financial problems arising from marital discord remain an important factor affecting educational outcomes.

Conclusion

The study concluded that marital discord among couples influences the academic performance of secondary school students in Basic Science in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. Specifically, the findings revealed that religious-related marital discord and family financial problems arising from parental marital conflicts are important family factors that can affect students' educational experiences. Although some students showed limited perception of the influence of these factors, the inferential analysis indicated that marital disagreements associated with religious differences and financial challenges contribute significantly to variations in students' academic performance. The study therefore concludes that a stable and supportive family environment is essential for promoting students' concentration, motivation, and achievement in Basic Science.

Recommendations

1. Parents should promote mutual understanding, religious tolerance, and effective communication in marriage to reduce religious-related marital conflicts that may affect students' academic performance in Basic Science.
2. Parents should develop effective financial management strategies and seek available support systems to minimize the effect of family financial problems on students' educational needs.
3. School counsellors should provide guidance and support services to students experiencing challenges arising from parental marital discord to improve their emotional wellbeing and academic engagement. Education stakeholders should organize family education programmes that encourage peaceful marital relationships, responsible parenting, and supportive home environments for students' academic success.

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