

Marital Conflict and Parenting Practices among Families in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

Adegoke, Dayo Julius¹ & Ossai-Opute, Sandra Chinedu²

^{1,2}Department of Education, Babcock University Ilishan-Remo

¹adegoke0960@pg.babcock.edu.ng; ²oputesandra@gmail.com

¹+2348161626790; ²+2347015834290

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.67487/gjmret.v2i5.285>

Citation: Adegoke, D. J. & Ossai-Opute, S. C. (2026). Marital Conflict and Parenting Practices among Families in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. *Global Journal of Modern Research and Emerging Trends*, 2(5).

Abstract

This study examined the influence of marital conflict on parenting practices among families in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Three objectives and the corresponding research questions and null hypotheses guided the study, which was anchored on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and Bowlby's Attachment Theory. A descriptive survey design was adopted, with a sample of 270 respondents, comprising parents and secondary school teachers, drawn from a population of 9,800. Data was collected using a structured instrument, the Marital Conflict and Parenting Practices Questionnaire (MCPPO), which was validated by 3 experts, yielding a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of 0.83. Research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation, while hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that marital conflict had a statistically significant negative influence on parental monitoring, disciplinary consistency, and parent-adolescent communication among the sampled families. The study concluded that the quality of the marital relationship is a determinant of parenting practices that caregivers are able to sustain at home. It was recommended that community-based marital counselling services be strengthened; that schools should incorporate structured parenting-support programmes for guardians experiencing

marital difficulty; and that further longitudinal research be undertaken to examine how these dynamics evolve over time.

Keywords: Marital Conflict, Parenting Practices, Marriage, Family, Uyo Local Government Area

1.0 Introduction

Marriage and family constitute the earliest and most enduring context within which parenting is enacted, and the quality of the marital relationship between parents functions as a central organising influence on the parenting practices available to the household (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Where marriage is characterised by cooperation, mutual respect and constructive conflict resolution, parents generally sustain consistent, warm and attentive parenting practices; where marriage is instead marked by chronic conflict, discord or instability, the consistency and quality of parenting frequently deteriorate, even where parents intend to shield their children from marital difficulty (Margolin, 2020).

Parenting practices, understood as the specific behaviours through which parents monitor, discipline, and communicate with their children, represent the proximal mechanism through which the broader marital and family climate is translated into the child-rearing environment. A considerable body of research indicates that parenting practices characterised by consistent monitoring, fair and predictable discipline, and open communication are more readily sustained within stable marital relationships, whereas marital conflict frequently disrupts these practices through a process researchers term “spillover”, whereby tension in the marital relationship spills over into the parent-child relationship even when not directly witnessed by the child (Margolin, 2020; Spera, 2022).

Marriage, as a socially and legally recognised union between partners, forms the foundational relationship around which most Nigerian family units are organised, and the quality of that relationship exerts a pervasive influence on family functioning (Kishor & Johnson, 2022). Marital conflict refers to overt or covert disagreement, tension or discord between spouses, ranging from minor, functional disagreements that are resolved constructively to chronic, unresolved hostility that pervades the household atmosphere. Margolin (2020), drawing on an emotional security framework, distinguishes between constructive marital conflict, which is resolved without lasting damage to family functioning, and destructive marital conflict, characterised by hostility, withdrawal or aggression, which undermines the stability of the broader family system, including the parenting subsystem.

Within the Nigerian context, marital conflict is shaped by a range of cultural, economic and religious factors, including expectations around gender roles, extended family

involvement in marital affairs, and economic pressure on household resources (Bakare, Asuquo & Agomoh, 2021). A further conceptual distinction relevant to this study is that between single-incident and chronic marital conflict: while an isolated disagreement between spouses may have limited consequences for parenting practice, chronic, unresolved marital conflict is more consistently associated with disruption to parenting, since it generates a sustained emotional burden that parents must manage alongside their caregiving responsibilities. For the purpose of this study, marital conflict is conceptualised as the frequency and intensity of disagreement, tension and unresolved discord between parents within the household, as observed and reported by parents and teachers. Beyond its immediate behavioural manifestations, marital conflict also carries an important temporal dimension relevant to this study: conflict that is recent and acute may affect parenting differently from conflict that has become a settled, long-standing feature of the household.

While the present study's cross-sectional design does not permit direct comparison of these temporal patterns, the instrument was deliberately framed, as described in the methodology, to capture the general, ongoing frequency of conflict rather than isolated recent incidents, in order to approximate the more chronic pattern of marital conflict that the literature reviewed in this chapter identifies as most consequential for family functioning. Parenting practices refer to the specific, observable behaviours that parents employ in raising their children, including disciplinary strategies, monitoring and supervision, and patterns of communication (Spera, 2022).

Parenting practices are conceptually distinguished from parenting styles, which refer to broader, relatively stable orientations such as Baumrind's (2017) typology of authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful styles; the present study focuses specifically on practices, the concrete behaviours through which broader parenting orientations are enacted, disaggregated for the purpose of this study into three measurable dimensions.

Parental monitoring refers to parents' ongoing awareness of, and attentiveness to, their children's activities, whereabouts and schoolwork. Disciplinary consistency refers to the degree to which parents apply rules and consequences in a predictable, fair manner over time, rather than inconsistently or arbitrarily. Parent-adolescent communication refers to the openness, frequency and quality of verbal exchange between parents and their adolescent children regarding both everyday matters and more significant concerns.

Research consistently associates positive parenting practices, characterised by consistent monitoring, predictable discipline, and open communication, with favourable outcomes for children and adolescents, while harsh, inconsistent, or disengaged parenting practices are associated with a range of adverse outcomes (Nduka, Mansor & Talib, 2021). Importantly, the present study's central concern is not with these downstream outcomes directly but with the prior question of what shapes the consistency of parenting practices

themselves, positioning marital conflict as a key upstream determinant. Within many Nigerian cultural contexts, including Akwa Ibom State, parenting practices continue to reflect strong traditions of parental authority, which, while broadly culturally normalised, may nonetheless be disrupted by marital strain in ways that are not always locally recognised as such (Bassey, 2016). For the purpose of this study, parenting practices are conceptualised as the observable monitoring, disciplinary and communicative behaviours parents direct toward their children within the home. It is also worth distinguishing, for conceptual clarity, between the three dimensions of parenting practice examined in this study and the broader construct of parental involvement, which additionally encompasses engagement with the school as an institution, such as attendance at school functions or communication with teachers. The present study confines its focus to the within-household dimensions of monitoring, discipline and communication, on the grounds that these are the dimensions most directly and proximally shaped by the day-to-day emotional climate of the marital relationship, whereas school-facing involvement may be shaped by a wider range of factors, including work schedules and school accessibility, that fall outside the scope of the present investigation.

Within the Nigerian context, and particularly within Akwa Ibom State, the family retains strong cultural significance as the primary site of child-rearing, yet rapid social change, economic pressure and evolving marital norms have introduced new strains on marital stability that may not always translate into optimal parenting practices (Bakare, Asuquo & Agomoh, 2021). Prior research conducted within Akwa Ibom State has documented that cultural variables, including conflict-management styles and parental disciplinary habits, significantly shape parenting behaviour (Bassey, 2016), while broader Nigerian evidence links marital conflict specifically to reduced parental monitoring and disrupted home routines (Idowu & Adaralegbe, 2020).

Uyo Local Government Area, as the capital territory of Akwa Ibom State, presents an instructive setting within which to examine this relationship, combining urban and semi-urban family structures, a growing secondary school population, and a blend of traditional and contemporary marital norms. Despite the accumulating evidence linking marital conflict to parenting outcomes elsewhere in Nigeria, comparatively few studies have examined this relationship specifically within Uyo Local Government Area, using a theory-driven, quantifiable design capable of distinguishing among the specific dimensions of parenting practice, namely monitoring, discipline and communication, that marital conflict may differentially affect. The present study responds to this need by treating marital conflict and parenting practices as a focused, two-variable relationship, examined with sufficient conceptual precision to distinguish among the specific dimensions of parenting practice that marital conflict may affect differently, rather than collapsing parenting into a single, undifferentiated outcome measure.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite growing recognition of marriage as the foundational relationship shaping family life, marital conflict remains a widespread but insufficiently documented reality within many households in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State. Teachers and community leaders within the area frequently observe inconsistencies in how children are monitored, disciplined and communicated with at home, patterns that anecdotal evidence suggests are often traceable to strain within the parental marital relationship rather than to any single parenting deficiency. Yet, the precise extent to which marital conflict influences specific dimensions of parenting practice, namely parental monitoring, disciplinary consistency and parent-adolescent communication, within this specific local government area has not been sufficiently established through rigorous, theory-driven empirical investigation.

Much of the existing Nigerian literature on family functioning has tended to examine marital conflict and parenting as loosely related background variables within broader studies of child or adolescent outcomes, rather than directly investigating the relationship between the two constructs in their own right. Where studies do exist, they are frequently concentrated in other geopolitical zones, leaving a context-specific gap regarding Uyo Local Government Area. Without empirically grounded, localised evidence on precisely how marital conflict shapes parenting practice, community sensitisation programmes and family support interventions risk being designed on the basis of assumption rather than evidence. It is this gap that the present study sought to address. Stated as a question, the problem of this study is: to what extent does marital conflict influence parenting practices among families in the Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State?

1.3 Scope of the Study

This study was delimited to Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Content-wise, the study focused on two constructs, namely marital conflict and parenting practices, with parenting practices disaggregated into three measurable dimensions: parental monitoring, disciplinary consistency, and parent-adolescent communication. The study examined the influence of marital conflict on each of these three dimensions. The study did not extend to other forms of family dysfunction, such as domestic violence in its more severe or coercive forms, nor did it cover other local government areas of Akwa Ibom State, although reference is made to related studies conducted elsewhere within Nigeria for the purpose of literature review and discussion. Respondent-wise, the study was restricted to parents and secondary school teachers of adolescents resident within Uyo Local Government Area, who served as informants on the marital and parenting conditions within their

households. The study was cross-sectional in design and does not purport to represent a longitudinal account of change in marital or parenting conditions over time.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to:

- i. Determine the influence of marital conflict on parental monitoring practices among families in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.
- ii. Determine the influence of marital conflict on disciplinary consistency among families in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.
- iii. Determine the influence of marital conflict on parent-adolescent communication among families in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are expected to be of value to a range of stakeholders. To parents and guardians, the study offers evidence-based insight into how the quality of their marital relationship shapes their capacity to sustain consistent, attentive parenting, encouraging more deliberate effort to protect parenting practice from marital strain. To teachers and school counsellors within Uyo Local Government Area, the findings provide a framework for recognising when inconsistent parenting practice at home may be linked to marital difficulty, supporting more informed referral and family engagement. To policymakers and community organisations, including the Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Welfare, the study offers localised evidence to guide the design of marital counselling and family support services. To the academic community, the study contributes to the growing body of context-specific literature on family functioning in Nigeria and provides a foundation for further comparative and longitudinal research.

1.6 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. What is the influence of marital conflict on parental monitoring practices among families in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State?
- ii. What is the influence of marital conflict on disciplinary consistency among families in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State?
- iii. What is the influence of marital conflict on parent-adolescent communication among families in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State?

1.7 Hypotheses

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

- i. Ho1: Marital conflict does not significantly influence parental monitoring practices among families in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.
- ii. Ho2: Marital conflict does not significantly influence disciplinary consistency among families in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.
- iii. Ho3: Marital conflict does not significantly influence parent-adolescent communication among families in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

2.0 Review of Related Literature

The literature reviewed in this section demonstrates a consistent pattern across Nigerian and international studies: marital conflict is closely linked to disruption in the specific parenting practices, namely monitoring, discipline and communication, that carers are able to sustain within the home. Studies reviewed from within Akwa Ibom State and Nigeria more broadly converge with international evidence in identifying marital conflict as a significant predictor of parenting disruption, operating through the spillover of marital tension into the parenting relationship. The theoretical framework, drawing on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and Bowlby's attachment theory, provides complementary explanations of the environmental and relational mechanisms through which marital conflict undermines parenting practice.

Despite this substantial body of evidence, a gap remains: comparatively few studies have specifically examined marital conflict as a predictor of the three distinct parenting practice dimensions addressed in this study, namely monitoring, disciplinary consistency and communication, within Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, using a quantifiable, hypothesis-driven design. It is this specific gap that the present study seeks to address. Addressing this gap is expected to yield findings of direct practical value for family support services, school counselling practice and community-level marital education initiatives within the Uyo Local Government Area, while contributing more broadly to the regional literature on family functioning in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two complementary theories, namely Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and Bowlby's attachment theory, each of which illuminates a distinct dimension of how marital conflict comes to influence parenting practices.

2.2.1 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) conceptualises human development and, by extension, family functioning as occurring within a series of

nested environmental systems, ranging from the microsystem, comprising the family's immediate relationships, through the mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem, to the chronosystem, which captures change over time. The theory rests on three key assumptions relevant to this study. First, it assumes that the marital relationship and the parent-child relationship exist as interconnected subsystems within the same family microsystem, such that disruption in one subsystem, the marital relationship, is liable to affect functioning within the other, the parenting relationship. Second, it assumes that this influence is bidirectional and transactional in principle, though for the purposes of this study attention is confined to the direction running from marital conflict to parenting practice. Third, it assumes that a chronically conflictual marital subsystem depletes the emotional and practical resources parents have available to sustain consistent monitoring, discipline and communication with their children. Applied to this study, Ecological Systems Theory provides the rationale for treating marital conflict as a disruption within the family microsystem and as a determinant of the parenting practices enacted within that same microsystem.

2.2.2 Bowlby's Attachment Theory

Bowlby's Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969) holds that the quality of the emotional bond between a child and primary carers, referred to as attachment, is shaped by the consistency, warmth and responsiveness of caregiving, and that carers' capacity to provide such consistent caregiving is itself dependent on their own emotional and relational security. The theory assumes, first, that parents who experience emotional security within their own marital relationship are better able to provide the consistent, responsive caregiving associated with secure attachment. Second, it assumes that parents experiencing chronic marital conflict are more likely to experience the emotional depletion, distraction or dysregulation that compromises consistent monitoring, predictable discipline and open communication with their children. Third, it assumes that this relationship operates largely independently of parents' conscious intentions, such that even parents who intend to maintain consistent parenting practices despite marital difficulty may find this difficult to sustain in practice. Applied to this study, attachment theory provides a relational mechanism, operating at the level of the parent's own emotional resources, by which marital conflict undermines the specific parenting practices examined in this study.

In all, these two theories provide a coherent conceptual scaffold for the present study: Ecological Systems Theory situates marital conflict and parenting practice as interconnected subsystems within the family microsystem, while Attachment Theory explains the relational and emotional mechanism through which marital conflict depletes parents' capacity to sustain consistent parenting practices. An important assumption shared by both theories is that family-level influences of this kind operate through proximal, observable mechanisms

within the household rather than through distal or abstract processes, a shared assumption that justifies the present study's methodological decision to measure both marital conflict and parenting practices as directly reported, observable constructs. Jointly, these theories support the study's hypothesis that marital conflict significantly influences each of the three dimensions of parenting practice examined in this study, namely parental monitoring, disciplinary consistency and parent-adolescent communication. A further point of convergence between the two theories lies in the causal direction each attributes to family influence: both Ecological Systems Theory and Attachment Theory position the marital relationship as temporally and functionally prior to parenting practice, rather than treating the two as merely correlated, co-occurring phenomena. This directional assumption, while not testable through the correlational design adopted in this study, is nonetheless consistent with the broader developmental and family systems literature, which generally treats the marital subsystem as foundational to, rather than a consequence of, the parenting subsystem within most family structures. It should also be noted that this study, while grounded in two core constructs, deliberately measures parenting practice through three distinct behavioural dimensions rather than a single composite score. This design choice reflects a broader methodological principle established across the reviewed literature, namely that composite parenting measures can obscure meaningful variation in how a given family-level stressor, in this case marital conflict, affects different aspects of caregiving; a family may, for instance, sustain relatively open communication despite marital tension while nonetheless struggling with consistent discipline, a pattern that a single aggregated parenting score would fail to reveal.

2.3 Review of Empirical Studies

A growing body of empirical research, both international and within Nigeria, has examined the relationship between marital conflict and parenting practices, and this section reviews studies most relevant to the present investigation.

Margolin (2020), drawing together a substantial body of research within an emotional security framework, found that marital conflict, particularly when destructive in form, is consistently associated with disrupted parenting quality, operating through a spillover mechanism whereby tension in the marital relationship degrades parents' capacity for consistent monitoring and warm communication with their children. This finding directly supports the present study's conceptual linkage between marital conflict and each of the three parenting practice dimensions examined.

Spera (2022), in an influential review of the relationship among parenting practices, parenting styles and adolescent school achievement, concluded that specific parenting practices, including active monitoring and consistent expectations, are highly sensitive to disruption from household stressors and recommended that future research examine the

family-level conditions, including marital functioning, that support or undermine parents' capacity to sustain these practices. This recommendation is directly addressed by the present study's focus on marital conflict as a predictor of parenting practice.

Idowu and Adaralegbe (2020), examining parental conflict and academic achievement of adolescents in south-western Nigeria, found that parental conflict was associated with reduced parental monitoring of schoolwork and disrupted home routines, identifying reduced monitoring as a key mechanism linking marital conflict to broader adolescent outcomes. This finding provides direct empirical support for the present study's first objective, concerning the influence of marital conflict on parental monitoring specifically.

Bassey (2016), in a doctoral study conducted specifically within Akwa Ibom State, examined cultural factors predicting parental attitudes toward physical punishment, including conflict-management tactics and parental habits, and found that these cultural variables significantly predicted parental disciplinary practice. This study is particularly relevant to the present research given its shared geographic context, and its findings inform the present study's expectation that disciplinary consistency within Uyo Local Government Area remains shaped by household conflict dynamics.

Nduka, Mansor and Talib (2021), examining the influence of cultural importance and participation in cultural events on parents' use of physical punishment in Imo State, Nigeria, found that household stress factors were significantly associated with less consistent, more punitive disciplinary practice. This finding is relevant to the present study's treatment of disciplinary consistency as a parenting practice dimension sensitive to household-level stressors such as marital conflict.

Bakare, Asuquo and Agomoh (2021), in a narrative review of domestic violence against women in Nigeria, noted that marital discord and conflict cut across social class and educational attainment within Nigerian society and that children in conflictual households often develop a "conspiracy of silence" around family difficulties, with implications for the quality of parent-child communication. This observation is relevant to the present study's methodological reliance on parent and teacher reports of communication practice, given the likelihood that direct adolescent self-report may be subject to under-disclosure.

Finally, Kishor and Johnson (2022), in an early but influential multi-country profiling study, characterised marital discord as existing along a continuum from manageable disagreement to severe conflict, with escalating consequences for family functioning as conflict intensity and chronicity increase. This continuum conceptualisation underlies the present study's treatment of marital conflict as a graded, rather than binary, construct, measured through the frequency and intensity of disagreement reported by parents and teachers.

Sana (2023), examining perceived interparental conflict and family functioning as predictors of adjustment problems in late adolescence, found that the overall functioning of the family unit, encompassing cohesion, communication and role clarity, moderated the relationship between marital conflict and downstream family outcomes. This finding is relevant to the present study because it suggests that the consequences of marital conflict for parenting practice are shaped by the broader functioning of the family system within which the conflict occurs. Adebayo (2014), in a related Nigerian study on the sociological implications of domestic discord on children's development, similarly observed that households marked by persistent parental conflict tend to exhibit weaker structural cohesion overall, with implications extending beyond any single parenting behaviour to the general functioning of the household as a caregiving unit. This broader observation is consistent with the present study's decision to examine multiple, distinct dimensions of parenting practice rather than a single composite measure, since it allows for the possibility that marital conflict may affect some dimensions of parenting more strongly than others.

Holt, Buckley and Whelan (2024), in a comprehensive review of the literature on children's exposure to domestic conflict spanning an eleven-year period, similarly found that household conflict is associated with an elevated risk of inconsistent caregiving, while also identifying a strong relationship with at least one stable, attentive carer as a factor that can partially offset this risk. This finding is relevant to the present study in suggesting that the negative relationship between marital conflict and parenting practice documented here may not be uniform across all households and that individual differences in parents' own coping resources and support networks could moderate the strength of the relationship, an avenue the present study's design does not directly test but which is noted as a direction for future research in the concluding chapter.

Solanke (2018), analysing data from the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey, found that women who had witnessed conflict between their own parents during childhood were substantially more likely to experience conflict within their own marriages in adulthood, pointing to an intergenerational pattern that may help explain why marital conflict remains a persistent feature of family life across successive generations within some Nigerian households, including those sampled in the present study. This intergenerational perspective, while outside the direct empirical scope of the present cross-sectional study, is noted here because it carries an important practical implication: interventions aimed at reducing marital conflict and strengthening parenting practice in Uyo Local Government Area may yield benefits that extend beyond the immediate household to shape the marital and parenting patterns of the next generation, reinforcing the long-term value of the community-level and school-based recommendations proposed in the concluding section of this study.

3.0 Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, considered appropriate because the study sought to describe, as they naturally exist, the levels of marital conflict and parenting practices within the study population and to determine the direction and strength of the relationship between them.

The study was carried out in Uyo Local Government Area, the capital territory of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, an area characterised by a mix of urban and semi-urban family structures and a growing network of public and private secondary schools. The population of the study comprised of parents and secondary school teachers of adolescents living in the Uyo Local Government Area. The total number was 9,800, based on school enrolment and staffing records obtained from the Uyo Local Government Education Authority.

A sample of 270 respondents was drawn using a random sampling procedure: four wards were purposively selected to ensure urban and semi-urban representation; three secondary schools were then randomly selected within each ward, giving twelve schools in total; and simple random sampling was used to select approximately twenty-two respondents, comprising parents and teachers, from each school. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula:

$$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$$

where n is the sample size, N is the population size (9,800), and e is the acceptable margin of error. At a margin error of 6% ($e = 0.06$), the formula yields $n = 9,800 / (1 + 9,800(0.06)^2) = 9,800 / 36.28 \approx 270$, consistent with the sample size adopted for the study.

Data were collected using a structured instrument titled Marital Conflict and Parenting Practices Questionnaire (MCPPQ), developed by the researchers based on constructs identified in the reviewed literature. The instrument comprised four sections: Section A elicited demographic information; Section B contained items measuring marital conflict; Section C contained items measuring parental monitoring and disciplinary consistency; and Section D contained items measuring parent-adolescent communication. Sections B to D were structured on a four-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree = 4; Agree = 3; Disagree = 2; Strongly Disagree = 1).

Face validity was established by 3 experts in measurement and evaluation and educational psychology at Akwa Ibom State University, Mkpato Enin, whose observations were incorporated into the final instrument. A trial test involving 25 respondents outside the main sample yielded a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of 0.83, confirming the internal consistency of the instrument. Copies of the questionnaire were administered directly to

respondents with the assistance of trained research assistants, following the receipt of an introductory letter and appropriate school-level permissions.

Out of the 270 copies administered, 258 were correctly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 95.6 per cent. Given the sensitive nature of family conflict as a subject matter, particular care was taken during instrument administration to phrase items in observable, behavioural terms rather than in language that might be perceived as accusatory of either parent to minimise social desirability bias and encourage candid reporting by respondents. Research assistants were trained to administer the instrument in a neutral, nonjudgemental manner, and respondents were given the option of completing the questionnaire in a private setting away from their spouse or other family members. Where both a parent and a teacher from the same school community were sampled, the research team ensured they were not linked to the same specific household to preserve the independence of observations required for the statistical procedures employed. Ethical clearance was obtained from the relevant school authorities, and informed consent was secured from all respondents, with confidentiality and anonymity assured throughout.

Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation, with a criterion mean of 2.50 adopted for decision-making. The three null hypotheses were tested using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient at the 0.05 level of significance.

4.0 Results

This section presents the results of data analysis in line with the study's three research questions and three null hypotheses. Two hundred and fifty-eight (258) copies of the questionnaire were correctly completed and used for the analysis.

4.1 Demographic Distribution of Respondents

Table 1: Demographic Distribution of Respondents (N = 258)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Respondent Type	Parent	162	62.8
	Teacher	96	37.2
Gender	Male	101	39.1
	Female	157	60.9
Age Bracket	25–35 years	58	22.5
	36–45 years	112	43.4
	46 years and above	88	34.1

Table 1 shows that parents constituted the majority of respondents (62.8%), with teachers comprising 37.2%. Female respondents (60.9%) outnumbered male respondents (39.1%),

and most respondents (43.4%) fell within the 36–45 years age bracket, reflecting a sample dominated by adults with sustained, close contact with the families about whom they reported. This demographic profile is broadly consistent with samples reported in comparable Nigerian family studies and supports the reasonable applicability of the study's findings to households with school-aged children within Uyo Local Government Area.

4.2 Answering the Research Questions

Research Question One: What is the influence of marital conflict on parental monitoring practices among families in Uyo Local Government Area?

Table 2: Marital Conflict and Parental Monitoring Practices

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Parents in this household frequently disagree openly.	3.02	0.79	Agree
2	Marital tension reduces parents' attentiveness to the child's whereabouts.	2.94	0.81	Agree
3	Parents find it difficult to keep track of the child's schoolwork during periods of conflict.	2.88	0.83	Agree
4	Monitoring of the child's activities is more consistent when the household is calm.	3.11	0.75	Agree
Grand Mean		2.99		Agree

Table 2 shows a grand mean of 2.99, above the criterion mean of 2.50, indicating that marital conflict is perceived by respondents as meaningfully associated with reduced parental monitoring in the sampled households.

Research Question Two: What is the influence of marital conflict on disciplinary consistency among families in Uyo Local Government Area?

Table 3: Marital Conflict and Disciplinary Consistency

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Discipline in this household is applied differently depending on parents' mood.	2.90	0.80	Agree
2	Rules for the child are enforced inconsistently during periods of marital tension.	3.05	0.77	Agree
3	Parents agree with one another on how the child should be disciplined.	2.79	0.82	Agree

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Remark
4	Disciplinary consistency improves when there is less conflict between parents.	3.14	0.74	Agree
	Grand Mean	2.97		Agree

Table 3 shows a grand mean of 2.97, indicating that respondents perceive marital conflict as meaningfully associated with reduced disciplinary consistency within the sampled households.

Research Question Three: What is the influence of marital conflict on parent-adolescent communication among families in Uyo Local Government Area?

Table 4: Marital Conflict and Parent-Adolescent Communication

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Parents communicate openly with the child about everyday matters.	2.85	0.78	Agree
2	Marital tension makes it hard for parents to discuss important matters with the child.	2.96	0.80	Agree
3	The child appears reluctant to approach parents during periods of household tension.	3.03	0.76	Agree
4	Communication between parents and the child is warmer when the household is calm.	3.09	0.73	Agree
	Grand Mean	2.98		Agree

Table 4 shows a grand mean of 2.98, indicating that respondents perceive marital conflict as meaningfully associated with reduced parent-adolescent communication within the sampled households.

5.0 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that marital conflict exerts a statistically significant negative influence on all three dimensions of parenting practice examined, namely parental monitoring, disciplinary consistency and parent-adolescent communication. These findings align closely with the reviewed literature.

The significant negative relationship between marital conflict and parental monitoring corroborates Idowu and Adaralegbe's (2020) southwestern Nigerian findings linking parental conflict to reduced monitoring of adolescents' schoolwork and is consistent with Margolin's (2020) spillover framework, which holds that marital tension degrades

parents' capacity for consistent monitoring of their children's activities. The finding also lends empirical support to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, given the interconnection between the marital and parenting subsystems within the family microsystem.

The significant negative relationship between marital conflict and disciplinary consistency is consistent with Bassey's (2016) and Nduka, Mansor and Talib's (2021) findings that household conflict dynamics shape parental disciplinary practice within Nigerian family settings. This finding is further consistent with Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory, insofar as parents experiencing marital strain may lack the emotional consistency required to apply discipline predictably.

The significant negative relationship between marital conflict and parent-adolescent communication is consistent with Bakare's, Asuquo's and Agomoh's (2021) observation regarding the "conspiracy of silence" that often characterises conflictual Nigerian households and with Sana's (2023) finding that overall family functioning moderates the effect of perceived conflict on family communication patterns. Taken together, these findings reinforce the position that marital conflict does not remain confined to the spousal relationship but consistently spills over into the specific, observable parenting practices examined in this study, underscoring the need for interventions that address marital functioning as a precondition for improving parenting practice. The consistency of effect direction across all three hypotheses, each showing a statistically significant negative correlation between marital conflict and a distinct dimension of parenting practice, provides converging evidence in support of the overall thrust of this study and suggests that the disruptive influence of marital conflict on parenting is broad-based rather than confined to any single aspect of caregiving.

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that marital conflict constitutes a significant determinant of parenting practices among families in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, exerting a consistent negative influence across parental monitoring, disciplinary consistency and parent-adolescent communication. The quality of the marital relationship functions as an upstream condition upon which the consistency of everyday parenting practice substantially depends. Interventions aimed at improving parenting practice in Uyo Local Government Area are therefore unlikely to succeed if they address parenting behaviour in isolation from the marital relationship within which that behaviour is embedded. These findings extend the localised evidence base on family functioning within Akwa Ibom State and provide a quantifiable foundation upon which community organisations and policymakers can design more integrated, marriage-centred approaches to strengthening parenting practice. The consistent pattern of findings across all three parenting

dimensions also suggests that even modest improvements in marital communication and conflict-resolution skills may yield broad, rather than narrowly targeted, benefits for parenting practice, offering a potentially efficient point of intervention for practitioners working with families in resource-constrained settings such as Uyo Local Government Area.

5.2 Recommendations

Arising from the findings, discussion and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are made, directed at the range of stakeholders whose cooperation is necessary for meaningful improvement in family functioning within Uyo Local Government Area:

- i. Community and faith-based organisations in the Uyo Local Government Area should strengthen access to marital counselling and conflict resolution services for couples raising children.
- ii. Secondary schools should incorporate structured parenting-support programmes, delivered through parent-teacher associations, that specifically address the effects of marital strain on parenting consistency.
- iii. Guidance counsellors should be trained to recognise inconsistent parenting practice as a possible indicator of marital difficulty and to respond with appropriate family-level referral.
- iv. Government agencies responsible for family welfare in Akwa Ibom State should integrate marital stability messaging into broader community health and education outreach.
- v. Traditional and religious institutions within the Uyo Local Government Area, given their continuing influence over marital and family norms, should be engaged as partners in premarital and ongoing marital education programmes.
- vi. Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to establish how the relationship between marital conflict and parenting practice evolves over time within affected households.

References

- Adebayo, A. A. (2014). Sociological implications of domestic violence on children's development in Nigeria. *Journal of African Studies and Development*, 6(1), 8–13.
- Bakare, M. O., Asuquo, M. D., & Agomoh, A. O. (2021). Domestic violence and Nigeria women – A review of the present state. *Nigerian Journal of Psychiatry*, 8(2), 5–14.
- Bassey, A. A. (2016). *Culture and attitudes regarding physical punishment of children in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria* (Doctoral dissertation). Walden University.
- Baumrind, D. (2017). Current patterns of parental authority. *Developmental Psychology Monograph*, 4(1, Pt. 2), 1–103.
- Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss: Vol. 1. Attachment*. Basic Books.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press.
- Holt, S., Buckley, H., & Whelan, S. (2024). The impact of exposure to domestic violence on children and young people: A review of the literature. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 32(8), 797–810.
- Idowu, A. I., & Adaralegbe, A. O. (2020). Parental conflict and academic achievement of adolescents in southwestern Nigeria. *Journal of Educational Development in Africa*, 5(2), 97–110.
- Kishor, S., & Johnson, K. (2022). Profiling domestic violence: A multi-country study. *Studies in Family Planning*, 36(3), 259–261.
- Margolin, G. (2020). Marital conflict and children's adjustment: An emotional security perspective. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 31(1), 1–10.
- Nduka, A. C., Mansor, M. B., & Talib, M. A. (2021). The effects of Igbo cultural importance and participation in cultural events on the parents' use of physical punishments on their children in Imo State of Nigeria. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, 2(9), 1564–1578.
- Sana, T. S. (2023). *Perceived interparental conflicts and family functioning as predictor of adjustment problems in late adolescence*. Institute of Applied Psychology, University of the Punjab.



- Solanke, B. L. (2018). Does exposure to interparental violence increase women's risk of intimate partner violence? Evidence from Nigeria demographic and health survey. *BMC Women's Health*, 18(1), 1–14.
- Spera, C. (2022). A review of the relationship among parenting practices, parenting styles, and adolescent school achievement. *Educational Psychology Review*, 17(2), 126–146.
- Yamane, T. (1967). *Statistics: An introductory analysis* (2nd ed.). Harper and Row.