

# Technologically Marital Conflicts and Academic Activities of Married Undergraduates in Public Universities

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**Abstract:** *The study focused on the relationship between technologically based marital conflicts and academic activities of married undergraduates in public Universities. Six research questions guided the study and six hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. A correlation survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 4069 married undergraduates. 400 undergraduates were sampled using multi-stage sampling procedure. Instrument for data collection was a 4-point rating scale questionnaire titled Technologically Based Marital Conflict and Married Undergraduates' Academic Activities Questionnaire (TBMCMUAAQ). It was validated by three experts. The internal consistency of the instrument was tested using Crombach Alpha procedure which yielded an overall index of 0.89. Data collected were analyzed using linear regression model in order to show the relationship between technologically based marital conflicts and married undergraduates' school attendances, study habits, concentration in school, participation in individual training and participation in teaching practice. The result from the study showed there exist a significant relationship between technologically based marital conflicts and married undergraduate adults school attendance, study habits, and classroom work participation. It implies that emotionally disturbed students are frustrated in their studies and end up having low academic activities. It was recommended among other things, that married students should strategize ways of mitigating marital conflicts consequent on the use of technology in order to enable them participate actively in their academic activities.*

**Keywords:** violent, media games, martial conflict, academic activities, married undergraduate

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## INTRODUCTION

Technology could be viewed as applied knowledge to the solutions of daily problem. It is also the processes by which human beings fashion tools and machines to increase their control and understanding of the material environment (Merrit 2019). Technology is derived from two Greek words, 'techne' meaning 'art, skill, cunning of hand,' and logia meaning 'study of' (Liddel & Robert, 2018). Technology therefore means the sum of techniques, skills, methods, processes used in the production of goods, services or in the accomplishment of objective such as scientific investigation, production, and socialization/interaction. Manuel (2019) noted technology is the science or knowledge put into practical use to solve problems or invent useful tools. Technology therefore could be seen as the knowledge of techniques, processes and the likes or knowledge that is embedded in machine in order to allow for operation without detailed knowledge of their working (Orem, 2023). Technology makes the world function more efficiently and effectively. Technology has helped to develop more advanced economies for global competitiveness and allowed the rise of a leisure class (Edong & Edidong, 2017). Technology helps in communication, learning and thinking, health, economy, transportation. Notwithstanding the above advantages, technology appears to be doing more harm than good to some families globally. Report reveal that using technologies has increased the rate of marital conflicts among couples (Nwigbo 2019).

Marital conflict is the state of tension or stress between married partners in the course of carrying out their marital roles. It arises between the partners, and it is indicative of sexual disagreement, child minding differences, temperamental differences or religious interest (Orem, 2023). In the context of this paper, marital conflict is a series of events that has been poorly handled among couple which have deeply damaged the marriage. Such conflicts may have been linked with technological use by any of the partners. Technological revolution has intruded into couple's life in subtle ways which the couples may not be aware of the changes that would emerge in their relationship. Technologies such as phones, social media, television, smart homes/domestic technologies have affected marital stability of couples (Okorie & Nwigbo, 2020). The authors noted that social media platforms, television, phones, computer ipad, smart home equipment, cooking utensils seem to be among the leading causes of marital conflicts among young couples.

Social media as a technological tool for social interactions is any digital technology that allows users to quickly create and share content with the public. It is interactive computer mediated technologies that facilitate the creation or sharing of information, ideas, career interests, and other forms of expression through virtual communities and networks (Kietzmann & Kristopher, 2021). Social media encompasses a wide range of websites and applications. Individuals use them to connect with other people outside their community, creating new friends and networking which might negatively impact on family or community. Social media could lead to neglecting the immediate family or community or bring opportunities to the family. Hertlein and Ancheta (2016) observed that social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Witter, Google, IMO, Instagram appear to have impact on marital stability and consequently on the rate of divorce among couples.

Furthermore, some partners may feel more comfortable expressing some of their personality challenges through social media, thus creating a greater divide between couples. In line with the above view Kerkhof, Finkenauer and Muusses (2021) found that people who spend more time on the internet report spending less time with family and friends thereby laying foundations for marital discordance. Such individuals might develop strong, relationships with mobile phones, to the detriment of home chores and family interactions. The advancement of technology, particularly the use of mobile phone seem to introduce a process of distraction and separation in couples relationships.

Television usage appear also to contribute to couples marital instability. Television play an increasing part in the modeling of behaviour, especially for women in the family (Orem, 2023). The number of conflicts, degree of arguments, disagreements and complaints among couples appear to be shaped more among heavy viewers who perceive the ideas on television as social reality (Moon, 2022). Such dysfunctional relationship beliefs-finding a perfect sexual partner/experience, partners cannot change themselves or the qualities of their relationship-are cultivated through watching television.

The use of smart homes equipment might also increase the rate of marital conflict among couples. A smart home is a residence that uses internet-connected devices to enable the remote monitoring and management of appliances and system. Smart home technology provides home owners security, comfort, convenience and efficient energy, by allowing them control smart devices using a smart home App on their smart phone or other network devices. Smart homes have often created tensions between couples which lead to divorce. Morgan (2019) noted that use of smart home equipments (Close Circuit Camera Television, CCTV) exposed the rate of infidelity among spouses. The CCTV has helped to improve security in homes, and helped also in increasing the rate of marital conflict among couples.

Technologies appear to have increased the rate of marital conflicts. Studies have revealed that the rate of marital conflicts has increased by 70% in the last two decades (Azubuiké, 2016, Udoh & Effiong, 2021). Izuchukwu (2021) also noted that prior to the year 2017 there were less domestic (Smart homes) and communication technologies, hence the rate of marital conflicts was low. Marital conflicts affect the victims' social relations and activities. It might translate to their poor achievement in academic activities.

Academic activity refers to any assigned work or project used to determine academic credit among which are examinations, project writing, industrial training, field trip, homework, or any competition sponsored or sanctioned by the school in which the students participate for the purpose of gaining academic advantage. Some academic activities include physically attending classes where direct interaction between the instructor and students exist, submitting an assignment, taking examinations, attending a study group that is assigned by the school. In the context of this work academic activities include students' school attendance, study habits, classroom participation, participation in industrial training and teaching practice.

Students' school attendance refers to attendance at any regular accredited educational institution for organized learning. School attendance is crucial to students' academic achievement. However, students' attendance to school is dependent on the family climate (Burk & Weir, 2015). Where there is marital conflict in the family there is the tendency for students to have poor attendance to school. Where married students come from conflict-ridden family the students' attendance to school would be stifled (Azubuiké, 2016).

Marital conflict may also affect students' study habits. Study habits include reading, taking notes, setting goals, holding study groups (Orem, 2023). Study habits appear effective or ineffective depending on whether they serve the students well or not. Effective study habits would only be achieved by stable minded students (Okoro, 2015). The domestic responsibilities of married women which include housekeeping, management and maintenance can affect married females' attention in their studies (Anyakoha & Eluwa, 2019). The above can be the experience of married undergraduates in Cross River. Some married students also are involved in petty trading, selling wares to raise income for the family when the Universities are not in session. Combining school work and family responsibilities might increase the challenge of marital conflict and consequently less attention would be given to academic activities (Orem, 2023). The author however pointed out that where married

students exhibit the spirit of determination, hard work, dedication and patience marital conflict would be reduced and their study habits would be enhanced.

Participating in classroom work would also be difficult for married students in conflict ridden families. Classroom participation takes different forms ranging from asking questions, responding to others questions, participation in discussions, providing feedback including face to face activities (seminars, debates, discussions, group work activities, experiments) (Orem, 2023). The above activities could be easily achieved if the married students come from relative conflict free families. In line with the above idea Biggs and Tang (2021) noted that when students learn passively their brains do not process information well, or maintain information efficiently. Students are likely to appreciate how learning in one area is useful in other settings if they personally relate their activities in those plural experiences, instead of seeing commonality through passive learning.

Some theories have been propounded in order to explain how marital conflict stem from the use of technological gadgets and the consequent effect on academic activities of married students. The Uses and Gratification Theory was propounded by Elihu Katz in 1970. It focused on understanding why and how people seek out specific media to satisfy specific needs. It explains how people deliberately choose media that will satisfy given needs which allow one to enhance knowledge, relaxation, social interaction, diversion or escape. The theory therefore imply that the use and addiction to mass media could lead to some marital conflict. As couples need constant communication, some married students relationship may grow sour. Under such situations the students may be lagging behind in academic activities.

The Cultivation theory by George Gerbner in 1972 holds that viewing television gradually leads to adoption of beliefs and conforming to the stereotype portrayed in television. Heavy viewers more often perceive the world in ways presented on television as reality. The theory implies that the idealized images of marriage shown in the media may make the couples to cultivate unrealistic beliefs about marriage. Ones inability to experience such reality in marriage would lead to marital conflict which would affect academic activities of the couple.

The Marital Communication theory was propounded by Weakland in 1956. It holds that lack of clarity in communication leads to conflict in marriage. The use of technology in communication might leave many things repressed and unsaid; the result is bitterness, frustration and tension between the couple. Where the information is marred it could lead to marital conflict and invariably would affect the academic activities of the couples.

The rate of marital conflict in the last ten years in Cross River State among undergraduate students has increased the concern of some people who witnessed the romantic love and expensive wedding ceremonies organized by the couples. Marital conflicts are not new, however, the problem now escalates more among people aged 25 to 45 years. Studies by Morasfaban (2016), and Taheri and Baynfar (2022) revealed that marital conflicts are related to the use of modern technology. Some of the married students spend more years in universities while some drop out. It is not certain how Technologically based marital conflict relate to academic activities of undergraduate students in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study is limited to all undergraduate married students in public tertiary institutions in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study aims at finding out the relationship between technologically based marital conflicts and school attendance of married undergraduates in public tertiary institutions in Cross River State; the relationship between technologically based marital conflicts and study habits of married undergraduates in public tertiary institutions in Cross River; the relationship between technologically based marital conflicts and classroom work participation of married undergraduates in public tertiary institutions in Cross River State. The research questions

are: What is the relationship between technologically based marital conflicts and school attendance of married undergraduates in public tertiary institutions in Cross River State? What is the relationship between technological based marital conflicts and study habits of married undergraduates in public tertiary institutions in Cross River State? What is the relationship between technological based marital conflicts and classroom works participation of married undergraduates in public tertiary institutions in Cross River State?

The hypotheses are: there is no significant relationship between technologically based marital conflicts and school attendance of married undergraduates in public institutions in Cross River State; there is no significant relationship between technological based marital conflicts and study habits of married undergraduates in public tertiary institutions in Cross River State; there is no significant relationship between technological based marital conflicts and classroom work participation of married undergraduates in public tertiary institutions in Cross River State.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research design for the study was correlation design. It focused on investigating the relationship between technologically based marital conflicts and academic activities of married undergraduates in public tertiary institutions. Cross River State was chosen for the study because of observed high rate of marital conflicts consequent on use of technology among married undergraduates in the universities. Some married undergraduates do not participate in school activities because of the conflicts. The population of the study was 4,069 married undergraduates from the two public universities in Cross River State. The sample for the study was 400 undergraduates. Multi stage sampling procedure was adopted. Two Universities were clustered. Then two faculties from each of the Universities were purposively sampled. Convenient sampling was used to sample four departments from the two faculties, hence the researcher was able to sample the respondents. The data was collected using the questionnaire tagged Technologically Based Marital Conflict and Academic Activities of Married Undergraduates (TBMCAAMU). The items were developed after a thorough review of the literature on technologically based marital conflicts. The instrument was structured on a four-point rating scale. It has three sections. Section A contained personal information of the respondents. Section B focused on technologically based marital conflicts and has eleven items such as, I quarrel with my spouse over the use of facebook, my spouse like the television channels I watch, I struggle with my spouse over the use of WhatsApp chat with my friends, my spouse frowns at me over my social media posts, while section C focused on academic activities such as, I come to school late, I miss lecturers, I lose concentration during studies, I lack interests studying with groups, I lack interest in asking questions in the classroom, I lack interest in carrying out class assignment. The scoring pattern was Always (4) Often, (3) Rarely (2) and Never (1).

The instrument was face validated by three specialists, one from measurement and evaluation, and two from psychology, Guidance and Counseling. They examined the clarity of the items, the usability and adequacy. The internal consistency of the items was established using 20 married undergraduates through test-retest method. The reliability coefficient was 0.85.

A letter of introduction was sent to the respondents' departments. This was to enable the departments permit their students to respond to the questionnaire. Four research assistants were used to administer 400 copies of the questionnaire. The assistants were briefed on the essence of the study, how to assist students respond to the items, and need to collect the copies of the questionnaire on the spot. All 400 copies of the questionnaire were collected.

**RESULTS**

The results of the study are presented based on the research questions and the hypotheses tested.

**Research Questions 1:** What is the relationship between technologically based marital conflict and school attendance of married undergraduate students in public Universities in Cross River State?

Data collected on the relationship between technologically based marital conflicts and school attendance of married undergraduate students in public University in Cross River State is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Mean Ratings on the Relationship between Technologically Based Marital Conflicts and School Attendance of Married Undergraduate Students**

Variable	N	Mean( $\bar{x}$ )	SD	R	r <sup>2</sup>
Technologically based marital conflict	400	3.30	.27	.90	.81
School attendance of married undergraduate	400	3.30	.34		

Table 1 showed the mean and standard deviation ( $\bar{x}$  3.30,  $\pm$  .27) technologically based marital conflicts and ( $\bar{x}$  3.30  $\pm$  .34) for school attendance. The table also revealed a computed r of .90 which is a high positive relationship between technologically based marital conflicts and school attendance of married undergraduate students in public universities in Cross River State. The r<sup>2</sup> is .81. It means that 81% of the students' school attendance is attributed to technologically based marital conflicts which implies that the higher the technologically based marital conflicts among married students the lower their level of school attendance.

**Research Question 2:** What is the relationship between technologically based marital conflicts and study habit of married undergraduate students in public universities in Cross River State?

Data collected on the relationship between technologically based marital conflicts and study habit of married undergraduate students in public universities in Cross River State using a linear model is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: The mean ratings on the Relationship between Technologically Based Marital Conflicts and Study Habit of Married Undergraduate Students.**

Variable	N	Mean(x)	SD	R	r <sup>2</sup>
Technologically based marital conflict	400	3.30	.27	.71	.57
Study habit of married undergraduates	400	2.64	.32		

Table 2 showed the mean and standard deviation ( $\bar{x}$  3.30  $\pm$  .27) for frequency of technologically based marital conflict and (x2.64,  $\pm$ .32) for study habit of married undergraduates. The table also revealed a computed r of .71 which is a high positive relationship between technologically based marital conflicts and study habit of married undergraduate students in public universities. The r<sup>2</sup> is .57. This means that 57% of the students' study habit is attributed to technologically based marital

conflicts which implies that the higher the technologically based marital conflict among students the lower they adopt effective study habits.

**Research Question 3:** What is the relationship between technologically based marital conflicts and classroom work participation of married undergraduate students in public universities in Cross River State?

For this research question data collected on relationship between technologically based marital conflicts and classroom work participation of married undergraduate students in public universities was analyzed using linear model. Summary of data analysis is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Mean rating on the relationship between technologically based marital conflicts and classroom work participation of married undergraduates.**

Variable	N	Mean(x)	SD	R	r <sup>2</sup>
Technologically based marital conflict	400	3.303	.265	.61	.37
Classroom work participation	400	3.037	.314		

Table 3 showed the mean and standard deviation ( $\bar{x}$  3.303.  $\pm$  .265) for technologically based marital conflict and ( $\bar{x}$  3.037  $\pm$  .314) for classroom work participation. The table also revealed a computed r of .61 which is a positive relationship between technologically based marital conflict and classroom work participation of married undergraduate students in public universities. The r<sup>2</sup> is .37. It means that 37% of the classroom work participation of married undergraduate students is due to technologically based marital conflict. This implied that the higher the technologically based marital conflict among married students, the lower married undergraduate students participate in classroom activities in the public tertiary institution in Cross River State.

### Hypothesis

**Hypothesis (Ho<sub>1</sub>):** There is no significant relationship between technologically based marital conflicts and school attendance of married undergraduate students in public universities in Cross River State.

The index of relationship obtained for content of marital technologically based marital conflict(X) and school attendance of married undergraduate students in public universities in Cross River State (Y) were subjected to a test of significance at 95% confidence level using the t. test of significance of r. Summary of result is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Test of significant relationship between technologically based marital conflict and school attendance of married undergraduate students in public universities in Cross River State.**

Computed r	r.	Adjusted r Square	Standard Error	Beta	T	P-value	Decision
.902	.813	.43035	.13915	-.61	20.384	.000	Sig

Table 4 reveals that the alpha level (0.05) is greater than the p value of 0.000. The researchers therefore reject the null hypothesis 1 that says there is no significance relationship between technologically based marital conflicts and school attendance of married undergraduate students in public universities in Cross River State.

**Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub><sub>2</sub>):** There is no significant relationship between technologically based marital conflicts and study habit of married undergraduate students in public universities in Cross River State. The index of relationship obtained for technologically based marital conflicts (X) and study habit of married undergraduate students in public universities in Cross River State (Y) were subjected to a test of significant at 95% confidence level using the t. test of significance of r. Summary of result is presented in Table 5.

**Table 5: Test of significance of relationship between technologically based marital conflicts and study habit of married undergraduate students in public universities in Cross River State.**

Computed r	r. Square	Adjusted r Square	Standard Error	Beta	T	P-value	Decision
.90165	.8129	.8110	.1391	-	20.384	.000	Sig
				.061			

In table 5 alpha level (0.05) is greater than the significance of p-value (0.000), the researchers reject the null hypothesis which state that there is no significant relationship between technologically based married conflicts and study habit of married undergraduate students in public universities in Cross River State.

**Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub><sub>3</sub>):** There is no significant relationship between technologically based marital conflicts and classroom participation of married undergraduate students in public universities in Cross River.

The index of relationship obtained for technologically based marital conflicts (X) and classroom participation of married undergraduate students in public universities in Cross River State (Y) were subjected to a test of significance at 95% confidence level using the t. test of significance of r. Summary of result is presented in table 6.

**Table 6: Test of significant relationship between technologically based marital conflicts and classroom participation of married undergraduate students in public universities in Cross River State.**

Computed r	r. Square	Adjusted r Square	Standard Error	Beta	T	P-value	Decision
-.615	.378	.372	.2492	.616	59.769	.000	Sig

Table 6 shows that the alpha level (0.05) is greater than the significance of p-value (0.000), therefore the researcher rejects the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between technologically based marital conflicts and classroom participation of married undergraduate students in public universities in Cross River State.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Result of research question 1, table 1 showed that a relationship exists between technologically based marital conflict and school attendance of married undergraduates in public Universities in Cross River State. The computed  $r$  was .90 while the coefficient of determination ( $r^2$ ) was 0.81. It implies that 81% of the variation in school attendance of married undergraduates was attributed to technologically based marital conflicts. It further means that 19% of the attendance of married undergraduates in public Universities in Cross River State is not related to technologically based marital conflicts. Hypothesis 1 table 4 further revealed there is significant relationship between technologically based marital conflict and academic activities of married undergraduates. Based on the items of study it means that technologically based marital conflicts make married undergraduates to come to school late, they do not stay in school till the closing hour, they miss workshops, they are usually late to examinations, miss lectures, miss field trips and are usually absent from teaching practice. The result suggests that though other students might witness poor attendance to school, but for the married undergraduates the cause of poor attendance stem from the technologically based marital conflict existing between the couples. Orji (2016) Azubuike (2016), Manuel (2019), Okorie and Nwigbo (2020) had earlier found out that married undergraduates find it difficult to attend to academic activities due to technologically based marital conflicts.

Result from research question 2 table 2 indicate a strong relationship between technologically based marital conflict and study habit of married undergraduates of public Universities in Cross River State. The computed  $r$  was 0.71 while the coefficient of determination ( $x^2$ ) was 0.57. It means that 57% of married undergraduates study habit is attributable to the frequency of their marital conflict. Hypothesis 2 table 5 also revealed that a significant relationship exists between technologically based marital conflicts and study habits of married undergraduates. In order to study one requires devotion of time, and attention to acquiring knowledge from books. The respondents agreed that they lose concentration, spend little time to their studies, and find it difficult to join others for group studies. They are easily distracted during group studies. In line with the above findings Ejike (2016), Okon (2020) including Okorie and Nwigbo (2020) noted that students could only concentrate when they are emotionally stable. The authors found out that married students lose concentration more whenever they have marital conflict, they also find it difficult to form reading group at home. Technologically based marital conflict therefore would account for lose of interest in and distraction from studies witnessed by married undergraduates from public tertiary institutions in Cross River State.

Result as presented in table 3 indicated there was a relationship between technologically based marital conflict and classroom participation of married undergraduates. The coefficient of determination ( $r^2$ ) was 0.37. It means only 37% of classroom work participation of married undergraduates in public tertiary institutions in Cross River State is attributable to the technologically based marital conflicts. Hypothesis 3 table 6 also revealed there was a significant relationship between technologically based marital conflict and classroom participation of married undergraduates. It means the respondents agreed they are reluctant in asking and answering questions in the classroom. Such reluctance may be due to the trauma experienced because of the marital conflict. (Eze, 2018). The students agreed they are not sometimes disposed to learn Dispositions are frequent and voluntary habits of thinking and doing something. Consequent on the above factors the respondents also reported they do not take note during lectures because of poor concentration (Udo & Effiong, 2020, Orem, 2023). Orem (2023) further reported that such students find it difficult to carry out class assignments and are scared of cooperating with other students in the classroom. The findings from the present study support the result of the above authors.

## CONCLUSION

Technologically based marital conflict contributes to married undergraduates' poor academic activities. Such academic activities as attendances to class, study habits, and classroom work participation ultimately are related to technologically based marital conflicts among married undergraduates. The lack of peace in families of married undergraduates lead to low academic activities and progress of the couples.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

- Family counselling centres should be provided and attended by would be couples. Such sessions would be used to equip the couples with the knowledge of challenges to be faced in their marriage due to technology.
- Communication gap among couples should be bridged through sharing ideas, experiences, and relationships.
- Conflicts being inevitable aspect of family relationship should be quickly resolved in order not to destroy the marital health of family members.

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