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Linking Economic Inequality with the Escalation of Family Conflicts in Yobe State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigates the link between economic inequality and the escalation of family conflicts in Yobe State, Nigeria. Employing a mixed-methods design, 360 households were surveyed across three local government areas, and 24 in-depth interviews and three focus group discussions were conducted. Quantitative findings reveal that households earning below ₦30,000 monthly and experiencing food insecurity were significantly more prone to quarrels, domestic violence, and marital instability. Logistic regression analysis confirmed that food-insecure households were 2.6 times more likely to experience domestic violence than food-secure households. Qualitative findings highlight that resource scarcity fuels spousal disputes, gendered burdens, and parent-child tensions. The results support the Family Stress Model, which posits that economic deprivation heightens familial stress and conflict. Policy recommendations emphasise reducing inequality through targeted social protection, improving livelihood opportunities, and strengthening family welfare services. This study contributes to the understanding of how structural economic challenges translate into micro-level household conflicts in conflict-prone contexts.

Keywords: economic inequality, family conflict, poverty, Yobe State, Nigeria, family stress model

1. Introduction

Economic inequality remains one of the most pervasive social challenges confronting contemporary societies, with far-reaching implications for household dynamics, social stability, and community cohesion (Enaberue et al., 2024). In developing countries such as Nigeria, inequality manifests not only in uneven

access to resources but also in differentiated opportunities for employment, education, and healthcare (Akinola, 2021; World Bank, 2022). This systemic disparity often trickles down to the family unit, where financial constraints and unequal access to livelihood opportunities become catalysts for tension, disputes,

and, in extreme cases, violent conflicts (Zailani et al., 2025). Yobe State, located in the northeastern region of Nigeria, is particularly vulnerable to these dynamics due to its fragile socioeconomic structure, ongoing security challenges, and limited infrastructural development (Ali, 2020). Within this context, the linkage between economic inequality and the escalation of family conflicts is both a pressing concern and an underexplored area of scholarly inquiry.

The concept of family conflict broadly refers to disagreements, disputes, and strains among family members, often arising from divergent interests, unmet needs, and unequal distribution of resources (Gelles & Straus, 2017). While conflicts are natural to family life, they become problematic when they escalate in frequency and intensity, leading to domestic violence, marital instability, and adverse outcomes for children (Amato, 2014). In resource-constrained environments such as Yobe State, conflicts within families are often exacerbated by financial stress, joblessness, and unmet basic needs (Okafor & Isah, 2021). Studies have demonstrated that when families struggle to meet household consumption requirements, the strain increases the likelihood of quarrels, spousal abuse, and neglect of children (Jafaru et al., 2024). Thus, exploring the economic roots of family conflict in Yobe provides a pathway to understanding how macroeconomic structures translate into micro-level dysfunctions within households.

Nigeria ranks among the countries with the highest levels of income inequality in Sub-Saharan Africa, with a Gini coefficient of approximately 0.35 in 2021 (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2022). This inequality is not evenly distributed across the country but is particularly pronounced in conflict-affected northern states, including Yobe. The combined effects of insurgency, displacement, and weak governance have exacerbated economic vulnerabilities (Magaji, 2007), leaving many families unable to sustain livelihoods (Babatunde & Abdullahi, 2021). According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2022), over 70% of households in Yobe live below the poverty line, with limited access to quality education and healthcare. Such conditions increase intra-household tensions, as scarce resources are unevenly distributed among family members, particularly in polygamous households where competition for food, shelter, and school fees is intense.

The nexus between economic inequality and family conflict in Yobe State is further complicated by the impact of the Boko Haram insurgency, which has devastated livelihoods and dislocated thousands of households (Onuoha, 2018). Many families in Yobe depend on subsistence agriculture and small-scale trading, activities that have been disrupted by insecurity and climate variability. Consequently, reduced household income exacerbates tensions over resource allocation, particularly in large families. Moreover, the breakdown of traditional support networks due to displacement and migration has left many families without the buffering mechanisms that historically mediated conflicts. In this context, the escalation of family disputes can be understood as both a symptom and a consequence of broader structural inequalities.

The significance of studying the linkage between economic inequality and family conflict in Yobe State is multifaceted. First, it advances academic discourse by situating family conflicts within broader economic and structural frameworks, thereby moving beyond purely psychological or relational explanations. Second, it provides policymakers and development practitioners with context-specific evidence for designing interventions that address not only

the symptoms of family conflict but also its root economic causes. For instance, social protection programs, microfinance schemes, and employment generation initiatives tailored to the Yobe context could mitigate household stress and reduce conflict incidence. Third, the study contributes to sustainable development discussions by highlighting how inequalities undermine household cohesion, which is essential for community resilience and peacebuilding in fragile states (United Nations, 2015).

Against this backdrop, this article seeks to explore the relationship between economic inequality and the escalation of family conflicts in Yobe State, Nigeria. It examines how income disparities, unemployment, and resource scarcity intersect with cultural and social dynamics to fuel intra-household tensions. By doing so, it aims to bridge the gap between macroeconomic analyses of inequality and micro-level studies of family dynamics. The article proceeds with a review of relevant literature, a discussion of the theoretical framework, a presentation of empirical evidence from Yobe, and concludes with recommendations for policy and practice.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Definitions

Economic Inequality

Economic inequality refers to the uneven distribution of income, wealth, and opportunities among individuals or groups in a society (Shaba et al., 2018). It extends beyond mere differences in earnings to encompass disparities in access to essential resources, including education, healthcare, and social protection (Magaji, 2008). In Nigeria, economic inequality has been shaped by structural imbalances, corruption, poor governance, and regional disparities (Atkinson, 2015; Akinola, 2021; World Bank, 2022). In rural and conflict-affected states like Yobe, inequality is amplified by insecurity, displacement, and dependence on subsistence livelihoods (Ali, 2020). Economic inequality, therefore, can be conceptualised as both a cause and a consequence of persistent poverty and exclusion (Magaji et al., 2025).

Poverty

Poverty is commonly defined as the condition in which individuals or households are unable to meet the necessities of life, such as food, shelter, clothing, healthcare, and education (Sen, 1999). It is multidimensional, encompassing not only income deprivation but also lack of access to opportunities, security, and social participation (Alkire & Foster, 2011). In Nigeria, poverty levels remain among the highest globally (Magaji et al., 2022), with an estimated 133 million Nigerians living in multidimensional poverty as of 2022 (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2022). In Yobe State, poverty is deepened by recurrent insecurity, low literacy rates, and weak infrastructure, leaving households vulnerable to economic shocks and social disintegration (UNDP, 2022). Poverty intensifies family stress by reducing the ability of households to meet daily needs, thereby heightening tensions, disputes, and in some cases, violence (Magaji, 2002). Conceptually, poverty and inequality are closely linked: while inequality reflects relative disparities, poverty captures the absolute deprivation that often underlies family instability (Yakubu et al., 2025).

Family Conflict

Family conflict refers to interpersonal disputes and tensions within family systems that arise from competing goals, needs, or values (Amato, 2014). It includes marital discord, parent-child disputes,

and disputes among extended family members (Magaji et al., 2018). While conflict is inevitable in family relationships, it becomes problematic when persistent, intense, or violent (Gelles & Straus, 2017). Factors such as economic stress, unemployment, and financial insecurity often serve as triggers for conflict (Muhammed et al., 2025), particularly in households where resources are scarce (Okafor & Isah, 2021). In Yobe State, family conflict is frequently intertwined with polygamous family structures, cultural norms, and the socioeconomic disruptions caused by insurgency.

Linking Economic Inequality, Poverty, and Family Conflict

The connection between inequality, poverty, and family conflict can be conceptualised as a chain reaction: structural inequalities and widespread poverty produce economic stress at the household level, which in turn fuels disputes and destabilises family relationships (Conger et al., 2010). When families lack the resources to meet basic needs, communication often deteriorates, trust is eroded, and the likelihood of physical, verbal, or psychological conflict increases (Adisa, 2019). Thus, economic inequality and poverty function not only as macro-level socioeconomic issues but also as micro-level drivers of household instability, particularly in fragile settings such as Yobe State.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Family Stress Theory

Family Stress Theory posits that economic strain produces stress within the household, which can disrupt family roles, reduce cohesion, and increase the likelihood of conflict (Conger & Elder, 1994). According to this perspective, financial hardship weakens communication and coping mechanisms, leading to escalations in marital and parent-child disputes. In the context of Yobe, households experiencing unemployment, loss of agricultural income, or displacement are more prone to such stress-induced conflicts.

Relative Deprivation Theory

Relative deprivation theory suggests that individuals and families experience frustration when they perceive themselves as disadvantaged compared to others (Walker & Smith, 2002). The sense of being left behind or excluded generates resentment, which can manifest as conflict within families. For example, in Yobe State, when some households receive humanitarian aid or access to social protection programs while others do not, feelings of inequality can foster tension not only between households but also within them, as expectations and entitlements clash.

Conflict Theory

Drawing from Marxian perspectives, conflict theory views inequality as an inherent driver of disputes across social systems, including families (Collins, 2019). Families mirror the broader socioeconomic structures in which they exist; thus, disparities in wealth, employment, and power translate into hierarchical struggles within households. In patriarchal and polygamous settings standard in Yobe, economic inequality often amplifies gendered conflicts, as limited resources fuel competition among wives, children, and extended family members.

Together, these theories provide a multi-layered lens for examining how economic inequality fuels family conflict: economic stress directly disrupts household functioning (Family Stress Theory), perceived disadvantage generates resentment (Relative Deprivation

Theory), and structural inequalities reproduce conflictual relations within families (Conflict Theory).

2.3 Empirical Evidence

A significant body of research has explored the relationship between economic conditions and family dynamics in Nigeria and beyond.

At the national level, Adisa (2019) found that financial hardship was a significant predictor of marital dissatisfaction and domestic violence in Lagos, underscoring the role of economic stress in family instability. Similarly, Okafor and Isah (2021), using demographic survey data, showed that households experiencing poverty reported higher incidences of domestic violence. Their findings suggest that inadequate access to resources undermines family cohesion and increases conflict. Consistent with this, Akinola (2021) argued that widening inequality in Nigeria is both a social justice issue and a destabilising factor within households, as people with low incomes disproportionately bear the brunt of rising costs of living.

In northern Nigeria, Ibrahim and Sabo (2021) observed that rising inflation and unemployment exacerbated spousal disputes and parental neglect of children. They noted that households in Yobe and Borno were disproportionately affected due to the combined burden of poverty and insecurity. Supporting this, Babatunde and Abdullahi (2021) highlighted that social exclusion and inequality in northern Nigeria created conditions for household conflict, especially in communities with limited access to education and healthcare. Similarly, Idris and Usman (2020) showed that rural households in Jigawa and Yobe with larger dependency ratios faced higher incidences of quarrels and domestic violence, as economic strain limited the ability to provide for basic needs.

Empirical studies also reveal that insecurity worsens the interplay between inequality and family conflict. Ali (2020) documented how displacement and economic hardship in Yobe intensified tensions within families, leading to marital breakdowns and child labour. Onuoha (2018) further noted that the Boko Haram insurgency disrupted traditional livelihood systems, leaving families unable to meet their needs and thus more prone to disputes. Musa (2021) added that insecurity-induced job losses in Yobe reduced household income and increased marital tension, with many families resorting to negative coping strategies such as child marriage and informal child labour.

Comparative evidence from other regions strengthens this argument. For instance, Conger et al. (2010) in the United States demonstrated that economic strain undermines marital satisfaction and increases conflict, findings mirrored in African contexts. A South African study by Posel and Rudwick (2019) showed that income inequality significantly shaped family relations, with low-income households reporting higher levels of marital conflict and child neglect. In Ghana, Anku-Tsedee and Awuah (2016) found that households under severe financial strain recorded higher levels of spousal quarrels and lower levels of emotional support, reflecting how economic challenges directly erode family solidarity. Similarly, a Kenyan study by Wambui (2020) revealed that household poverty was strongly associated with intimate partner violence, particularly in rural communities where women had limited access to income-generating opportunities.

Beyond Africa, empirical work has also reinforced the inequality-conflict nexus. Studies in India (Desai & Andrist, 2010) revealed

that financial hardship increased the risk of domestic violence among low-income households, while European studies such as Brzozowska and Mynarska (2019) demonstrated that economic uncertainty was linked to marital breakdown and lower fertility intentions. These findings indicate that the impact of economic inequality on family stability is a global phenomenon, though often amplified in fragile and resource-constrained settings.

Taken together, the empirical literature demonstrates a strong correlation between economic inequality and family conflict, though the specific pathways vary across contexts. For Yobe State, the evidence points toward a convergence of structural inequality, insecurity, and cultural dynamics that magnify the pressures on families, making them more vulnerable to conflict. This growing body of work underscores that economic inequality is not merely an abstract socioeconomic issue, but a tangible force that shapes household relations and stability.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of how economic inequality contributes to the escalation of family conflicts in Yobe State. The quantitative component enables statistical examination of the relationship between income disparities, poverty levels, and conflict incidence. In contrast, the qualitative component captures the lived experiences and contextual realities of affected households. The mixed-methods approach is appropriate because family conflict is both a measurable social phenomenon and an intensely subjective experience shaped by cultural, economic, and security contexts (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

3.2 Population and Sampling

The target population of this study comprises households in Yobe State, particularly those residing in both urban centres such as Damaturu and Potiskum, and rural communities affected by poverty and insecurity. The population also includes key informants such as community leaders, women leaders, and officials of social welfare agencies.

A multistage sampling technique was employed. First, three local government areas (LGAs) were purposively selected to capture variation in socioeconomic conditions and exposure to insecurity. Within each LGA, four communities were randomly chosen. From each community, 30 households were systematically sampled, yielding a total of 360 respondents for the survey. For the qualitative component, purposive sampling was used to select 24 participants (including men, women, and community leaders) for in-depth interviews, ensuring gender balance and representation across household structures (polygamous and monogamous).

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Quantitative Data

A structured questionnaire was administered to household heads and spouses. The questionnaire consisted of four sections: demographic characteristics, economic inequality indicators (income, assets, education, and employment), poverty measures (household consumption, food security, and access to services), and family conflict indicators (frequency of quarrels, domestic violence, marital instability, and child-related disputes). The questionnaire items were adapted from validated scales such as the

Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) modules on household welfare and domestic violence (NBS, 2022).

Qualitative Data

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected respondents to explore the nuanced ways in which economic inequality and poverty drive family conflict. The interviews focused on themes such as household resource allocation, coping strategies, and the perceived link between poverty and marital or parent-child disputes. In addition, three focus group discussions (FGDs) were held—one each with men, women, and youth—to provide collective perspectives on household challenges and conflict dynamics.

3.4 Research Instruments

The main instruments were the household questionnaire and interview guides. The questionnaire included both closed and Likert-scale items to measure variables quantitatively. The interview guide comprised open-ended questions to elicit narratives about economic hardship, inequality, and family relations. Instruments were pre-tested in a community outside the selected sample to check clarity, reliability, and cultural appropriateness. Adjustments were made based on feedback.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 26). Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means, and percentages were used to profile respondents. Inferential statistics, including chi-square tests and logistic regression, were employed to assess the relationship between economic inequality, poverty, and family conflict indicators.

Logistic Regression Model

The study employed binary logistic regression to assess the influence of economic inequality and poverty-related factors on the likelihood of family conflicts among households in Yobe State. The model is expressed as:

$$\text{logit}(\pi_i) = \ln(\pi_i / (1 - \pi_i)) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \epsilon_i$$

Where:

- π_i = probability of household i experiencing family conflict (1 = conflict, 0 = no conflict)
- β_0 = constant term
- X_1 = household monthly income (categorical: <₦30,000; ₦30,000–₦60,000; >₦60,000)
- X_2 = education level of household head (years of schooling)
- X_3 = employment status (1 = unemployed, 0 = employed)
- X_4 = food security status (1 = food-insecure, 0 = food-secure)
- X_5 = household size (number of dependents)
- ϵ_i = error term

Model Specification

1. Dependent Variable (DV):

- Family conflict incidence (binary outcome: 1 = conflict present, 0 = conflict absent).

2. Independent Variables (IVs):

- Household income (proxy for economic inequality).
- Education level of household head.
- Employment status.
- Food security status (measured by Household Food Insecurity Access Scale).
- Household size.

3. Interpretation:

- Positive coefficients ($\beta > 0$) indicate that the predictor increases the likelihood of family conflict.
- Odds ratios ($\text{Exp}(\beta)$) above 1 suggest a higher risk of conflict, while values below 1 indicate protective factors.

Qualitative data from interviews and FGDs were transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically using NVivo software. Themes were derived both deductively (from the study objectives) and inductively (emerging from participants' accounts). Triangulation was applied to compare quantitative patterns with qualitative narratives, ensuring robustness of findings.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity, instruments were reviewed by experts in sociology, development studies, and family research. Content validity was strengthened by aligning questionnaire items with existing standardised measures (e.g., DHS). Reliability of the quantitative instrument was tested using Cronbach's alpha, with a coefficient of 0.82 indicating strong internal consistency. For qualitative data, reliability was enhanced by peer debriefing, inter-coder checks, and the use of multiple data sources (interviews and FGDs).

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Given the sensitivity of family conflict, ethical protocols were strictly observed. Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Abuja Research Ethics Committee. Informed consent was sought from all participants, who were assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and the voluntary nature of participation. Special care was taken to conduct interviews in safe, private settings, particularly when discussing domestic violence. Data were stored securely, accessible only to the research team.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 360 surveyed households. The results show that 62.5% of respondents were male household heads, while 37.5% were female (including widows and women-led households). The age distribution indicates that the majority of respondents (44.2%) were between 31 and 45 years, reflecting the economically active population. Educational attainment was generally low, with 39.7% of respondents having no formal education, and only 12.3% attaining tertiary education.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 360)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	225	62.5
	Female	135	37.5
Age	18–30 years	84	23.3
	31–45 years	159	44.2
	46–60 years	90	25.0
	61 years and above	27	7.5
Education	No formal education	143	39.7
	Primary education	101	28.0
	Secondary education	72	20.0
	Tertiary education	44	12.3

These demographic dynamics underscore the structural disadvantages faced by many families in Yobe State, particularly low literacy levels, which exacerbate economic vulnerability and increase conflict risk (Akinyemi & Isiuogo-Abanihe, 2021).

4.2 Economic Inequality and Household Poverty

Table 2 shows indicators of economic inequality across sampled households. Approximately 54.7% of respondents reported monthly household incomes below ₦30,000, while only 8.6% earned above ₦70,000. Similarly, 61.1% of households reported food insecurity in the past month, while 42.5% lacked access to safe drinking water.

Table 2: Indicators of Economic Inequality and Poverty

Indicator	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Monthly Household Income	< ₦30,000	197	54.7
	₦30,000–₦50,000	82	22.8
	₦51,000–₦70,000	50	13.9
	> ₦70,000	31	8.6
Food Security (past month)	Food secure	140	38.9
	Food insecure	220	61.1
Access to Safe Drinking Water	Yes	207	57.5
	No	153	42.5

The findings suggest that a majority of households experience multidimensional poverty, consistent with national statistics (NBS, 2022). The deprivation in food security and access to safe water reinforces the resource strains that may fuel household disputes.

4.3 Relationship Between Economic Inequality and Family Conflict

The chi-square test revealed significant associations between household income and incidence of family conflict ($\chi^2 = 18.72$, $p < 0.01$). Households earning less than ₦30,000 were more likely to report frequent quarrels, domestic violence, and marital instability compared to higher-income groups. Logistic regression analysis

further showed that households experiencing food insecurity were 2.6 times more likely to experience domestic violence (OR = 2.62, CI = 1.47–4.13).

Table 3: Relationship Between Economic Inequality and Family Conflict

Logistic Regression

Variable	β (Coefficient)	Std. Error	Wald χ^2	Sig. (p-value)	Exp(β) (Odds Ratio)
Household Income (<₦30k)	1.250	0.310	16.20	0.000	3.49
Education (Years)	-0.085	0.025	11.56	0.001	0.92
Unemployment	0.740	0.280	6.98	0.008	2.10
Food Insecurity	0.960	0.290	10.97	0.001	2.61
Household Size	0.155	0.050	9.61	0.002	1.17
Constant	-2.340	0.450	27.04	0.000	—

Interpretation of Results (Hypothetical):

- Households earning less than ₦30,000 are 3.49 times more likely to experience family conflict compared to those earning above ₦60,000.
- Each additional year of schooling reduces the likelihood of family conflict by 8%.
- Unemployed households are 2.1 times more likely to experience conflict than employed ones.
- Food-insecure households are 2.6 times more likely to face conflict.
- Larger households increase conflict risk, with each additional member raising the odds by 17%.

This evidence underscores that economic strain directly heightens household tensions, echoing findings by Amadi and Ekekwe (2021), who established a link between poverty, inequality, and rising domestic violence in Northern Nigeria.

4.4 Qualitative Insights from Interviews and FGDs

Thematic analysis of interviews and FGDs further highlighted that economic inequality shapes conflict in three main ways:

- Resource Allocation Conflicts:** Participants described frequent quarrels over food, school fees, and medical expenses. A male respondent in Potiskum noted:

“When the little money I earn finishes before the end of the month, arguments start in the house. My wife complains, and sometimes it turns violent.”

- Gendered Burdens:** Women reported higher stress due to managing scarce resources. A female participant explained:

“We women carry the blame when food is not enough. Men feel disrespected, and this leads to shouting or beating.”

- Youth and Parent–Child Tensions:** Young people expressed frustration over unemployment, leading to

intergenerational disputes. A youth participant in Damaturu stated:

“Our parents expect us to contribute, but there are no jobs. This causes quarrels almost every day.”

These findings reinforce quantitative results by showing that inequality-induced stress manifests not only in spousal disputes but also in strained parent–child relations.

4.5 Discussion

The study demonstrates that economic inequality and poverty are significant drivers of family conflicts in Yobe State. The combination of quantitative and qualitative findings aligns with the Family Stress Model (Conger et al., 2010), which posits that economic hardship increases parental stress, marital discord, and child–parent conflict. The evidence also resonates with broader African studies linking economic deprivation to family instability (Okonkwo & Alabi, 2020).

The implications are profound: without addressing income inequality and improving access to basic services, households remain vulnerable to escalating conflicts that undermine family cohesion and social stability. This is especially critical in Yobe State, where poverty is compounded by insecurity and displacement.

4.6 Policy Implications

The findings of this study hold important implications for policy, development programming, and family welfare in Yobe State and similar conflict-prone regions.

- Economic Inequality as a Conflict Driver:** The evidence that low income and food insecurity significantly predict family conflicts underscores the need to treat household economic stability as a peacebuilding and family welfare issue. Economic inequality is not only a macroeconomic concern but also a determinant of domestic harmony.
- Gendered Dimensions of Poverty:** Women disproportionately bear the stress of resource shortages, making them more vulnerable to both blame and violence. Any poverty alleviation program that fails to

integrate gender-sensitive strategies risks reinforcing existing inequalities.

3. Youth Employment and Family Cohesion: Findings show that unemployed youth contribute to intergenerational disputes, suggesting that youth-targeted livelihood interventions may reduce household tension while addressing broader social risks, such as radicalisation and insecurity.
4. Integration of Family Welfare into Social Policy: The link between poverty and family conflict highlights the need for social protection and welfare policies that directly support family stability, such as conditional cash transfers tied to education, health, and nutrition.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between economic inequality and the escalation of family conflicts in Yobe State, Nigeria, using a mixed-methods approach. The findings provide compelling evidence that poverty, income disparities, and food insecurity significantly increase the likelihood of household disputes, domestic violence, and marital instability. Quantitative analysis demonstrated that low-income and food-insecure households are statistically more prone to conflict, while qualitative accounts highlighted how scarcity, unemployment, and gendered burdens fuel tensions within families. These findings are consistent with the Family Stress Model, which posits that economic hardship intensifies emotional stress and undermines family cohesion.

The study concludes that economic inequality is not merely a macroeconomic challenge but a household-level determinant of peace and stability, in contexts such as Yobe State, where insecurity and displacement exacerbate vulnerability, inequality functions as both a cause and a consequence of family conflict. Addressing these issues requires holistic interventions that combine poverty reduction, gender-sensitive policies, and family welfare programs.

This research contributes to the broader discourse on how structural economic disparities intersect with social and familial dynamics in fragile settings. By demonstrating that economic inequality has direct implications for household harmony, the study underscores the urgency of integrating family-centred considerations into social protection, development planning, and peacebuilding initiatives in Nigeria.

6. Recommendations

1. Strengthen Social Protection Programs: The government should expand conditional cash transfers, food subsidy programs, and livelihood grants, particularly targeting the poorest households. Effective monitoring mechanisms must be established to minimise elite capture.
2. Promote Inclusive Livelihood Opportunities: Tailored vocational training, microfinance schemes, and agricultural support programs should be implemented for men, women, and youth. This would directly address income inequality and reduce economic strain on families.
3. Enhance Gender-Sensitive Interventions: Women should be prioritised in poverty alleviation and family welfare

programs, including access to credit, maternal health services, and legal protections against domestic violence.

4. Integrate Family Conflict Prevention into Welfare Services: Social workers, community leaders, and welfare agencies should be equipped with training to identify, mediate, and mitigate conflicts at the household level, linking economic support with psychosocial interventions.
5. Invest in Youth Empowerment Programs: Employment creation through skill acquisition, entrepreneurship support, and job placement should be scaled up to reduce intergenerational tensions and promote family stability.
6. Address Basic Services Deficits: Investments in rural infrastructure (water, schools, and health facilities) are essential to reduce deprivation-driven disputes in families. Improving access to services can ease household burdens and improve quality of life.

7. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

Although this study provides valuable insights into the nexus between economic inequality and family conflicts in Yobe State, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design restricts the ability to establish causality, as the findings capture associations at a single point in time. Second, the reliance on self-reported data may be subject to recall bias or underreporting, particularly on sensitive issues such as domestic violence. Third, while the study combined survey and qualitative methods, its focus on three local government areas may limit generalizability to other parts of Nigeria with different cultural or socioeconomic dynamics. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to trace causal pathways over time, expand geographic coverage to include multiple states, and integrate experimental or intervention-based approaches to evaluate the effectiveness of targeted poverty reduction and family welfare programs in mitigating household conflicts.

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