

Perceived Relationship between Family Conflict and Students' Academic Achievement in Ibadan North Local Government Area, Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract This study investigated the role of family conflict as a determinant of students' academic achievement. A questionnaire was designed to elicit the students' perceptions on the presence of conflict in their family settings. This was accompanied by an administration of self-constructed achievement tests in Mathematics and English Language. Two hundred and forty five (245) students were sampled from eight senior secondary schools in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. The empirical analysis was accomplished by a mix of frequency counts, percentage, mean, standard deviation and t-test. Findings revealed that majority of the students were affected by family conflict which is often demonstrated in their presence by their parents. It was also revealed that the students' achievement tests were considerably low. The status of students' family conflict was then statistically analysed relative to their scores on the achievement tests. The t-test analysis showed that the family conflict is a significant driver of students' academic achievement. In particular, students from conflicted families scored lower than their counterparts from no-conflict families. Furthermore, it was found that female students had a higher pass rate than male students. This may be connected with general attention deficit that the male students are described with. It is therefore recommended that school authorities should call the attention of parents to the dragging role of family conflict on their children's academic achievement. They may also

be counselled on using appropriate conflict management mechanisms, given that conflict is inherently unavoidable in human interaction.

Keywords Family Conflict, Students, Academic Achievement, t-test, Oyo State

1. Introduction

The academic achievement of students is the major criterion by which the effectiveness of learning instructions is evaluated [1]. As such, consistent poor students' achievement in the Nigerian secondary schools remains a major issue of concern to the government, teachers, parents and the students themselves [2]. Although the resource allocation to the Nigeria's education sector has not been remarkable, stakeholders expect considerable performance of students in given achievement tests [3]. Thus, researchers have been interested in explaining factors which may drive the learning outcomes of students, as indicated by their performance in achievement tests. This study contributes to the stream of literature by focusing on the relationship between family conflict and the academic achievement of students.

Given the trajectories of post-school life of the Nigerian secondary school students, their academic achievement is

the key determinant of their propensities to proceed to higher institutions of learning [4] in particular and maximize their life's potentials in general [5]. Furthermore, students' academic achievement tends to show the efficacy or otherwise of the schools and tends to determine the future of students [1]. It follows that it may be noteworthy to investigate factors, such as family conflict, which may elevate or drag such potentials. In the context of the present research, family conflict refers to the situation whereby the smooth interaction, relation and communication among members of a family is disrupted due to a particular trigger or a set of triggers [6, 7]. Family conflict is said to develop when members of a family have different beliefs or viewpoints, when members misunderstand one another, when someone gets hurt feelings and develops resentment, and when miscommunication leads to mistaken assumptions and subsequent arguments [1, 8]. From another perspective, family conflict can occur between the parents or between parents and their children and can be a result of a lack of trust, effective dialogue, respect, job or meaningful engagement [9]. The conflict comes in the form of fights, quarrels, spouse battering, child abuses and child molestation [10]. It can result in a bad atmosphere in the home, separation or divorce of parents [11].

The role of family conflict is considered in this study because when conflict comes into the home, everything crumbles including the educational aspirations of the children [8]. The mechanism by which this happens was summarized by Olubor [1] as involving emotional disconnection that the child suffers from home to school. For the children to maximize the learning outcomes, there is the need to have settled emotions when they leave home for school [7]. However, when conflict occurs between parents, the children suffer emotional blackmail, making them lose interest in learning activities. This consequently makes them score low in given achievement tests [1, 7]. Given the foregoing, this paper aimed at surveying the existence of conflict in the students' families and analyzing the relationship between such conflict and academic achievement of the students.

2. A Review of Related Literature

Morrissey [12] investigated the emotions of academically successful students and reported that such students tend to have high self-esteem, high self-confidence, negligible levels of depression and anxiety, be socially inclined, and are less likely to engage in substance misuse or abuse. The researcher further linked these emotional behaviors to absence of long-term conflict between the students' parents and other family members. Peaceful homes produce emotionally stable students for the schools to train, resulting in improved performance of these students [12]. This research finding was corroborated by Wamala et al [13] when they considered the role of family stability on the performance of students in terminal

examinations. Wamala et al [13] added that efforts to herald impressive performance of students should actually emanate from the students' homes. Both Morrissey [12] and Wamala et al [13] maintained that family conflict is a determining factor of academic achievement that cannot be overemphasized.

Furthermore, Obeta [14] asserted that children from families with serious conflicts are often at high risk of learning fatigue. This means the children carry the burden of their parents to school and get unmotivated to participate cognitively in the learning process. As a result, such children struggle to follow classroom instructions and perform tasks which may position them for high scores in achievement tests and examinations [14]. Moreover, Olubor [1] stated that family setting represents the environmental configuration that determines the students' attention and interest in learning activities. This also supports the view of Lane and Porch [15] who maintained that the family environment where children find themselves goes a long way in determining their learning ability and ultimately their academic performance in school work. If a home environment is not intellectually stimulating, students find it difficult to cope with learning instructions and may eventually drop out of school [1].

In addition, the home has been identified as an overwhelming factor affecting students' performance. Jayanthi et al. [16] affirmed that academic performance of students could be traced to the home they come from and the form of conflicts within the home. The presence of home conflict is an indicator that the students' performance will be in bad trajectories [16]. Furthermore, D'zurilla and Sheedy [17] claimed that the family environment has the most powerful influence in determining the child's academic performance. To amplify this view, Bichi [18] declared that family conflicts within the home especially between parents can cause serious effect on the children's academic performance. Previously, Akinsanya et al [19] pointed that family violence is a major cause of poor academic performance among children. These authors seemed to be unanimous in submitting that academic success is achieved by students only if there is absence of overt conflict in their family settings.

More empirically, Okeke [20] conducted a study on the productivity and academic performance of students facing family conflict in secondary schools. Having employed a stratified random sampling technique to select students from thirteen secondary schools in Orlu Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria, the researcher focused on the effect of parental conflict on the academic performance of students. The author found that family conflict is a significant determinant of students' academic performance. It was further revealed that, in some cases, the parents are unaware of the academic consequences of engaging in conflict in the presence of their children [20]. This research finding was reconsidered by Adebayo [21] among a different sample of secondary school students in Ife Central Local Government Area of Osun State, Nigeria. Similar to

the findings by Okeke [20], Adebayo [21] reported that students from conflicted families find it difficult to concentrate on learning instructions and perform optimally in achievement tests. The key difference between the two papers is that while Okeke [20] analyzed the family conflict relative to the students' performance in their terminal examinations, Adebayo [21] administered an achievement test to directly measure the students' academic achievement. The present research took insights from the latter's methodology.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study has a descriptive design with the primary focus on family-related determinants of students' academic achievement. It specifically describes the variation of performance of students in response to the degree and intensity of conflicts within their families. This follows closely Ndiyo [22] and Adebayo [21] who asserted that a descriptive design enables the researcher to collect and analyse data towards discussing the characteristics of a population sample. Thus, this study adopts the ex-post procedure towards understanding the existing phenomenon of academic achievement of students in relation to family factors.

3.2. Population and Sample

The population of this study comprises all senior secondary one (SS1) students in senior secondary schools located in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. According to the official record of the Oyo State's Teaching Service Commission as reported by Adigun and Aborishade [23], there are a total of 4,455 (male: 2240; female: 2215) SS1 students in 34 senior secondary schools within this local government. However, a two-stage sampling procedure was applied to select only 245 students. First, a convenience technique guided the selection of 8 schools from the population of 34 schools. The selected schools were close to each other, making the instrument administration relatively convenient. Second, from the 8 schools, purposive technique was used to select 245 students in SS1 classes. This study featured only the SS1 students as participants because the failure rate of this category of students is popularly described as high relative to other senior classes – most senior secondary students do not get their feet balanced until they are in SS2 [3].

3.3. Instrument Design and Administration

Two research instruments were designed and administered in this study. This first is a questionnaire which collects descriptive information from the students, and the second is an achievement test in English Language

and Mathematics. The questionnaire has two sections A and B. Section A features questions on the demographic characteristics of the respondents while Section B elicits information on the perception of respondents on the role of family conflicts on their academic achievement. While Section A has diverse relatable options to pick from, the items on Section B were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 4 (Strongly Agree or SA), 3 (Agree or A), 2 (Disagree or D) to 1 (Strongly Disagree or SD). The achievement tests for both subjects contained 25 multiple-choice questions each with 4 options against each question. The unified syllabus for senior secondary schools was used to generate the test items.

In a pilot study, 24 students (about 10% of the sample) were randomly selected to fill out the questionnaire and answer questions on the two achievement tests. The split-half technique was used to compare the students' responses and scores. This ascertained the face and content validity properties of the instruments. In addition, there was a repeated administration of the instruments in the interval of one month. The responses were compared and this resulted in the Cronbach alpha coefficient of 89%, confirming high reliability property of the instruments. Having obtained satisfactory validity and reliability properties of the instruments, the authors then proceeded to administer the actual instruments.

Both instruments were administered to the students with the retrieval rate of 100%. This was achieved given that the students were asked to fill out the questionnaires on the spot and their principals and teachers were used as gatekeepers to aid the administration. The whole instrument administration lasted 50 minutes, which is broken down as follows. The first 10 minutes were used to brief the students of the research purpose and how their data would be confidentially used and discarded afterwards. They spent the next 25 minutes to supply answers on the achievement tests, and the next 10 minutes to fill the questionnaires. Finally, students were allowed to review their answers for 5 minutes before the submission.

3.4. Method of Data Analysis

The demographic data of the respondents were analysed using frequency counts and percentages. Their perceptions of the situation of family conflict which relates to students' academic achievement were analysed using descriptive statistics including frequencies, means and standard deviations. Finally, the students' achievement scores relative to their perceptions of family conflict were analysed using t-test approach. This helped in explaining the degree of significance in the students' achievement scores as might be indicated by the presence or absence of conflicts in their respective family settings. The SPSS software was employed for the data analysis. The analysis was anchored by testing the following hypothesis:

Ho: family conflict has no significant relationship with students' academic achievement

This hypothesis has been stated in the null form such that its rejection implies that family conflict has a significant relationship with students' academic achievement. On the other hand, if the hypothesis is not rejected, it means there is no significant relationship between family conflict and students' academic achievement.

4. Analysis and Discussion of Findings

This section begins with the descriptive analysis of the students' demographic information and perceptions of family conflicts. Later, it progresses to generate inferences on the relationship between family conflicts and students' academic performance using t-test analysis.

4.1. Students' Demographic Characteristics

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variable	Distribution	Frequency count	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	123	50.2
	Female	122	49.8
Age group (years)	12-13	5	2.0
	14-15	180	73.5
	16-17	35	14.3
	17- 18	13	5.3
	18+	12	4.9
Parents' educational status	No formal education	46	18.8
	Primary education	79	32.2
	Secondary education	101	41.2
	Tertiary education	19	7.8
Family Type	Monogamous	156	63.7
	Polygamous	89	36.3
Family Structure	Nuclear	152	62.0
	Extended	93	38.0

As presented in Table 1, 123 respondents (50.2%) are male students while 122 respondents (49.8%) are female students. The students mostly (87.8%) fell in the age bracket of 14-17 years. This represents the standard age

representation of SS1 students in Nigeria. Given the 6-3-3-4 system, students at SS1 class are expected to be 16 years old. Nevertheless, the rise of private secondary schools implied that some students completed their primary education before age 12, so it was noteworthy that some students were only 14 years old at SS 1. Also, there are bound to be late learners who are above 16 years old while in SS1. It was also gathered that 63.7% of the students came from monogamous family setting while the remaining 36.3% were from polygamous family structure. Lastly, 152 (62%) respondents have nuclear family structure such that they live under the care of only their fathers and mothers while the remaining 38% have extended family structure as their behaviours are majorly influenced by their uncles and aunts.

According to the students, the majority of their parents (41.2%) had only secondary education. While 32.2% of the parents had only primary education, about 19% did not have any form of formal education. Nevertheless, 7.8% of the parents had higher-educational qualification.

4.2. Conflict within Students' Families

Table 2 reports the perceptions of students on the degree of conflicts among their parents. Having recorded the frequency counts and percentages of each response, a mean response score was obtained. With low standard deviations for all the mean responses, it was related that the students' perceptions can be discussed with high confidence level. It was gathered that the majority of the students generally agreed that there were considerable levels of conflicts within their families. Specifically, they claimed that their parents quarrel and shout at each other in their presence (mean response = 2.90). This may be connected to the low educational attainment of these parents – it was revealed in Table 1 that 92.2% of the students' parents did not go to higher institution in their educational journey. Again, this agrees with the earlier submission of [24] that parents with less-than-degree qualifications do not recognize the consequences of overt family conflicts on their children's educational achievement. In addition, the students mentioned that their parents set limit with them within the family, resulting in tensions in family relationships (mean response = 2.79). This connotes the idea among the strict parents who do not freely mix with their children out of needless fear of ridicule and disrespect [23]. Sarkinfada and Kanoma [25] added that market men and women do not often bond with their children in a bid to create lovely family relationships. Thus, this research outcome can be said to echo the earlier submissions in the literature.

Table 2. Extent of conflict within the students' family

S/N	Item	SD	D	A	SA	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.	My parents quarrel and shout at each other in my presence	7 (2.9%)	52 (21.2%)	145 (59.2%)	41 (16.7%)	2.90	0.70
2.	My parents set limits that create tension within the family	10 (4.1%)	56 (22.9%)	154 (62.9%)	25 (10.2%)	2.79	0.67
3.	My parents do not communicate well with each other	3 (1.2%)	28 (11.4%)	180 (73.5%)	34 (13.9%)	3.00	0.55
4.	My parents do not care for each other's welfare	9 (3.7%)	58 (23.7%)	173 (70.6%)	5 (2.0%)	2.71	0.57
5.	My parents transfer their aggression on us the children	6 (2.4%)	36 (14.7%)	178 (72.7%)	25 (10.2%)	2.91	0.58

Students also agreed that their parents do not communicate well with each other (mean response = 3.00); do not care for each other's welfare (mean response = 2.71); and do transfer aggression onto the children (mean response = 2.91). These perceptions are connected with the parents' dispositions towards their children's educational potentials. When the questionnaires of students who disagreed with these measures were carefully considered, it was got that they had filled that their parents had higher-educational qualifications. This lends credibility to the assertion that the primary source of lingering family conflicts is low educational attainment of the parents. However, this does not necessarily imply that educated parents do not quarrel and conflict with each other. It rather suggests that conflicts within the educated families are better managed in a way that does not markedly disrupt the educational aspirations of the children.

Having obtained that there exists a high rate of conflicts within the students' families (Table 3), their scores in the administered achievement tests were cross-examined with their perceptions on family conflicts. This was anchored by the t-test analysis whose results are summarized in Table 5. The t-test involves that the students were first grouped according to their report of conflict within their families before their scores in the English and Mathematics

achievement tests were compared. For convenience, the average scores of students in the two subjects were considered. The results were interpreted at 5% level of significance, implying that the probability of committing type 1 error (rejecting the hypothesis that should not have been rejected) is 5%. This is important given that the research centers on the students' behaviours which may not be *precisely* analyzed. To this end, the null hypothesis in this study is formulated as: family conflict does not significantly influence students' academic achievement.

Table 2 shows that the students generally attest to the notion of conflict in their family settings. However, to generate more informed perspectives, the students' answers were further sieved to obtain the exact number of the sampled respondents who experienced family conflict and those who did not. The outcome signposted that a majority of 80.4% students reported as having family conflict while 19.6% did not experience family conflict. This is summarised in Table 3. The mean scores in Table 3 are obtained by taking the average of the mean scores of students in the two categories. It was also noted that the female students edged the male students on the family conflict – more female students came from conflicted families than male students.

Table 3. Number of students with family conflict and those without

	Number of students			Percentage			Mean score
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Aggregate	
Presence of family conflict	87	110	197	70.7%	90.2%	80.4%	2.86
Absence of family conflict	36	12	48	29.3%	9.8%	19.6%	1.27

Table 4. The scores of students in the achievement tests

	Number of students who passed (a score of 40%+)			Number of students who failed (a score less than 40%)			Pass rate		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Mathematics	38	52	90	85	70	155	30.9%	42.6%	36.7%
English Language	41	55	96	82	67	149	33.3%	45.1%	39.2%

Table 5. The t-test analysis of students' scores relative to their opinions on family conflict

	Students who experience family conflict	Students who do not experience family conflict	t-statistic	p-value
Mean score in Mathematics	28.9%	36.8%	12.36*	0.034
Mean score in English Language	32.5%	48.8%	10.08*	0.006

* indicates that the difference between scores of different students' groups is significant

Table 4 reports the students' pass rates in the two achievement tests. It was obtained that the students generally failed the tests as the pass rates were less than 40%. However, the students' performance in English Language (pass rate of 39.2%) is more than that in Mathematics (pass rate of 36.7%). Also, the female students performed relatively better than the male students. While 30.9% of male students passed Mathematics, the female students passed at 42.6%. And the pass rate of female students is higher than that of male students in English by 11.8 percentage points. Following this, the students' test scores were paired with their answers on the questionnaires. On this front, the students were grouped as experiencing family conflict or otherwise. Table 5 presents the t-test analysis of the students' opinions relative to their scores on achievement tests.

According to Table 5, having carefully screened the students' answers on the questionnaires, it was revealed that while students from conflicted families scored an average of 28.9% in Mathematics, those without family conflicts scored a higher score of 36.8%. And as the former category scores 32.5% in English, the latter scores 48.8%. It therefore follows that although both categories of students failed the Mathematics achievement test, students from peaceful families passed English while those from conflicted families failed it. The t-statistics of both measures are sufficiently large to demonstrate that the family conflict plays an important role in affecting the students' academic achievement. Furthermore, the p-values are both less than 5%, implying that the presence or

absence of family conflict is statistically significant at 5%. It follows that the null hypothesis above is rejected. These findings add to the stream of literature on the determinants of students' academic performance. In particular, the results support the earlier conclusions of Adebayo [21] and Adigun and Aborishade [23].

The mechanism by which family conflict affects the students' academic performance is not far-fetched. When the student experiences conflict with their family, they are emotionally discharged in the teaching-learning process [1]. This connotes that there are propensities for the students to lose interest and attention in the classroom settings. This is especially so when they share their feelings with peers who reported absence of such conflict at the given point in time. There is therefore a likelihood that students are depressed as they keep to themselves. In effect, their learning outcomes are not maximized, and they therefore record low scores in achievement tests [3]. In another argument put forward by Amadi [24], students from broken or separated families tend to lack adequate resources for meaningful learning to take place. They are mostly absent with learning materials partly because their parents do not consider such materials as priority and partly because they themselves do not bother to ask out of low interest and concentration in learning instructions [24]. In the absence of learning tools, the students have been conditioned to score low when evaluated for a program of instruction. Such students have also been reported by Sarkinfada and Kanoma [25] as having poor attitudes in school settings. They are known for truancy and deviant behaviours which do not support

optimisation of learning opportunities.

5. Conclusions

Given the preceding findings, it is argued that a major determinant of students' academic achievement is family conflict. While conflict is inevitable in human interaction, there is the need for parents to recognise the effects of perpetual conflict particularly in the awareness of their children. Children from conflicted families go to school with disgruntled mind and emotional misconfiguration. They struggle to cope with the teaching-learning process. As a result, they achieve low scores in a given achievement test. If anyone wonders about this outcome, the curiosity may be satisfied by noting that children naturally dislike witnessing their parents in overt conflict. With the impression that all is not well at home, the children struggle to make everything well in their educational pursuits. It is therefore recommended that the school authorities may occasionally call the parents together with the bid of counselling them on the danger of overt family conflict. They may be nudged to dissociate from verbal or emotional abuse of each other right in the presence of the children. If they do this, the merits awaiting them include higher academic performance of their children, peace of mind of having emotionally-balanced children and overall efficiency in the spending of their resources on contributing to the progress of their children. The schools also benefit as the learning outcomes of students are maximized. Finally, the ultimate beneficiary of the no-conflict family is the students who grow at optimized potentials in their educational and other life pursuits.

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