

## PARENTAL CONFLICT AS CORRELATES OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY, ABUJA

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### Abstract

The study investigated parental conflict as correlate of secondary school students' academic performance in Federal Capital Territory Abuja, Nigeria. The study employed a correlational survey research design, five research questions and three null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. A total of three hundred and eighty-four students were drawn from the sampled schools. A self-designed questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. The first instrument was self-constructed questionnaire, titled Parental Conflict as Correlate of Secondary School Students' Performance Questionnaire (PCCSSSPQ). The instrument contains 10 items and two sections; section A has the personal information, B contains items on parental conflict and the second instrument is the academic performance of the students in English studies and Mathematics. The instruments were vetted through use of test-retest reliability and face and content validity techniques. Reliability index of 0.72 and 0.84 for the PCCSSSPQ are found to be appropriate for the study. The Data collected is statistically analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Specifically, the research questions were analyzed using mean score while the hypotheses were subjected to t-test and ANOVA (analysis of variance). The study revealed that the level of parental conflict is low and academic performance of above average. It equally revealed that parental conflict does not significantly influence students' academic performance and no gender bias. The study recommends that marital conflict should be avoided among married couple due to the hazardous effect it may have on the academic performance of their wards, although not significant in this study. Parents should make effort to resolve marital conflict before it escalates into hostilities and violence. Child-parent attachment should be encouraged in families, which will influence the academic performance of their wards.

**Keywords:** Parental Conflict and Academic Performance

### INTRODUCTION

Conflict can be defined as the lack of peace in an environment. Conflict in a family refers to a situation whereby the smooth relationship and interaction among members is impeded because of one thing or another. Conflict can be between parents or parent and children. It may result from lack of trust, dialogue, communication, respect, drunkenness and idleness. Parental conflict is any conflict which occurs within a family between husbands and wives, parents and children, siblings, or with extended family members. Parental conflict can lead to things like divorce, fighting between husband and wife,

sibling rivalry and parent-child power struggle and so on. Murphy (2015) highlighted the view that parent conflict plays a central role in shaping the child's education through their influence. Therefore, if parents are consistently having conflict at home, children may be affected negatively in their academic pursuit. Many students may not adequately prepare for parental conflict which may result into psychological, emotional and poor academic realities.

Academic performance referred to measurable outcomes of a learner's efforts in the educational process, usually expressed through grades, test scores, cumulative grade point averages, or other standardized indicators that reflect the extent to which learning objectives, knowledge, skills and aptitude have been attained. The knowledge and skills measured in the child's performance does not depend solely on the attributes the child is born with, but his family background, social contacts, teachers and the general environment in school and outside the school. Ogunleye (2015) defined academic performance as quantitative and qualitative expression of a learner's ability to demonstrate knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired through instruction at a particular time in the learner's educational journey. Interestingly, performance in the classroom takes central role in the academic development of the students. Pekrund and Elliot (2023), opined that performance is the behaviour of an individual that can directly observed by another individual therefore, academic performance has been seen as a term used for students based on how well they are doing in studies and in classes.

Parental conflicts may transmit negatively on students' academic performance. This suggests that students from homes where there is conflict may cause students to feel hopeless, angry, depressed and anxious (Grych and Finsham, 2020). Kiura (2020), stressed that a healthy relationship between husband and wife depends on self-understanding, understanding spouse, balance between individuality, mutual love, proper management of conflicts and sound skills in mutual dialogue and communication. It is therefore emphasized that parents need to assume full responsibility for their children education, eternal destiny, prepare for life and guide them towards the right way. If parents are not in harmony with each other or between them, it affects children in their

physical, cognitive, affective, psychomotive and ultimately may prevent maximum realization of their academic performance in school. They do not only suffer at home but also when they go out to school or visit friends, they carry the burden of their parents' disharmonious relationship with them. While many authors such as the ones quoted above believed that parental conflicts have significant impact on academic performance, many others disagreed. However, no noteworthy studies in this field have been carried out in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. In the light of this, the researcher investigated how parental conflict relates to academic performance of secondary school students in the FCT.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Parental conflict and its assumed effects on student's academic performance is a cause for grave concern to students, parents, teachers, school authorities, government and even psychologists. A general family atmosphere of peace, harmony and cohesion may strongly influences the overall development of the child, just as an atmosphere of anger and discord may have a greater impact on children. Cunning (2023) stated that, the nature of family which a child belongs has a lot of influence on the general life pattern of the child. Therefore, the successful passage through the process of educational attainment is partly dependent on the entire parental assistance. Thus, ineffectiveness or inadequate parental assistance may lead a child to feel overwhelmed, consequently to withdraw from school. Hence, parental stability can be a strong determinant of students' academic performance in school, the opposite of which can be disastrous. Supporting this view Stephen (2021), posited that parental instability can cause parents to become more inconsistent and ineffective in parenting and may reduce responsiveness to childrens' cognitive needs, diminishing the quality of the emotional relationships and attachment between parents and children. This will consequently promote less parental involvement in school work, less or no attention given to early and regular attendance at school and less supervision outside the home thereby impacting academic performance adversely. Sroufe, (2023), revealed that between 4% and 20% of variation in children poor academic performance and emotional maladjustment is accounted for by the levels and nature of <https://journals.unizik.edu.ng/jtese>

family instability experienced by the children in the family. A very unstable family has little or no time for playing parental roles, thus leading to the reductions in the amount of time parents spend monitoring school work, supervising their children and reductions in parent-child communication. This is often accompanied by increase in truancy and more negative attitudes towards school as exhibited by the adolescents including absconding from schools and poor academic performance among secondary school students are in FCT. It is in the light of this situation that the researcher intends to carry out a study to investigate the influence of parental conflict on academic performance of secondary school students in the FCT Abuja, Nigeria.

**Research Questions:**

1. What is the level of parental conflict in the FCT senior secondary schools?
2. What is the level of student's academic performance of senior secondary schools in the FCT?
3. What is the relationship between parental conflict and students' academic performance in the FCT?
4. Is there any significant difference between parental conflict and academic performance due to gender?
5. Is there any significant difference between parental conflict and academic performance due to the age of the students?

**Hypotheses:**

**HO<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between parental conflict and students' academic performance.

**HO<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant difference between male and female in their parental conflict and academic performance.

**HO<sub>3</sub>:** There is no significant difference between parental conflict and academic performance on the basis of age.

**Method**

The study adopted a correlational survey design. A correlational design is a type of research method that involves observing two variables in order to establish a statistically <https://journals.unizik.edu.ng/jtese>

corresponding relationship between them. In view of this assertion, the correlational survey design is considered appropriate for this study since it involves finding out the relationship between parental conflict and students' academic performance among senior secondary school students in Abuja.

Population is any collection of specified group of human beings or of non-human entities such as objects, educational institutions, geographical areas among others (Koul, 2023). Population is the group of interest to the researcher and it is this group or individuals to which the results or outcomes of the study is generalized. Therefore, the population of this study comprises all the public senior secondary school students (SSII) in Abuja. Sample size of three hundred and eighty-four (384) senior secondary school (SSII) students, were used for the study. The senior secondary school (SSII) students were used because they are next in line to face NECO, WAEC, NABTEB and JAMB. The simple random technique was used to select twelve schools (two from each Area Council). Names of schools were written on a piece of papers, folded and mixed up. Then selection was done, one at a time. Three hundred and eighty-four (384) respondents were selected using the purposive sampling technique. It was used in order to select students who may have experienced parental fight or quarrel at home.

The instrument is self-constructed questionnaire, titled Parental Conflict as Correlate of Secondary School Students' Performance Questionnaire (PCCSSSQ). The instrument contains 10 items and divided into two sections; section A has the personal information while section B contains items on parental conflict designed along a four-point Likert Scale with options as Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The second instrument is the students' promotional examination results in English Studies and Mathematics from the sampled schools. The instruments were face and content validated by experts in the measurement and evaluation unit in the department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education University of Abuja. Their observations, comments and corrections were carried out to produce a final draft of the questionnaire.

Test-retest method of reliability was used to determine the reliability of the instruments. Test-retest reliability is a technique used to estimate components of measurement error by repeating the measurement process on the same subjects, under conditions as similar as possible and comparing observations (Lavrakas, 2018). The instrument was administered twice within interval of two weeks on a representative sample of sixteen (16) students. The two scores were correlated using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The correlation coefficient index of 0.71 and 0.84 were arrived at and found to be appropriate for the study.

## RESULTS

**Research Question One:** What is the level of parental conflict in the FCT senior secondary schools?

**Table 1: Status of Parental Conflict among Secondary School Students in FCT (N= 384)**

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Dev	Decision
1	I often see my parents arguing	2.63	1.03	Agree
2	When my parents have an argument, they yell a lot	2.38	0.93	Disagree
3	Even when my parents stop argument the stay mad at each other	2.43	0.99	Disagree
4	I get scared when my parents argue	2.52	0.96	Agree
5	I don't know what to do when my parents have arguments	2.62	0.98	Agree
6	My parents often get into arguments about things I do at school	2.25	1.00	Disagree
7	It is usually my fault when my parents argue	2.38	1.05	Disagree
8	I feel like I have to take sides when my parents have a disagreement	2.40	0.99	Disagree
9	My parents have arguments because they are not happy together.	2.50	1.03	Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.46</b>	<b>0.99</b>	

As shown in Table 1 the status of parental conflict among secondary school students in Federal Capital Territory was analyzed. The result shown that only four items were average or above average, while the remaining five were below average. Also, a sectional mean of 2.46 indicates that the responses were generally below average.

**Research Question Two:** What is the level of student's academic performance of senior secondary schools in the FCT?

**Table 2: Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in the FCT (N=384)**

Descriptive Statistics	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mathematics	70.36	16.37493
English	66.41	15.02485
Academic Performance	68.39	11.75082

As shown in Table 2 in respect of the level of student's academic performance of senior secondary schools in the FCT was presented. The analysis shows the level of students' academic performance in Mathematics is accepted with a mean score of 70.36 which is above average, also the level of academic performance of students in English Language is accepted with a mean score of 66.41 which equally above average and finally, the mean score of students' academic performance of students in both Mathematics and English language is 68.39, which is above the average mean value, there the mean score on students' academic performance is above average.

The null hypotheses in this section were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between parental conflict and students' academic performance.

**Table 3: Relationship between Parental Conflict and Students' Academic Performance**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.055 <sup>a</sup>	.003	.000	.79452

a. Predictors: (Constant), ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

b. From Table 3, the R value, the multiple correlation co-efficient is a measure of the quality of the prediction of the dependent variable. An R- value of 0.055 indicates a low level of influence of parental conflict on academic performance.

The R Square called the coefficient of determination shows the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variables. The R square value of .003 indicates that 0.3% of the variability of independent variable (Parental Conflict) can be explained on the basis of the dependent variables (Academic

Performance). To determine the statistical significance of influence on academic performance by parental conflict, analysis was carried out and results as presented on Table 3.

**Table 3B: ANOVA Table for Test of Influence on Academic Performance by Parental Conflict**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
1	Regression	.723	1	.723	1.146	.285 <sup>b</sup>	Accepted
	Residual	241.144	382	.631			
	Total	241.867	383				

Dependent Variable: Academic Performance

Predictors: (Constant), Parental Conflict

Table 3 shows whether the independent variables significantly influence the dependent variables. A significant value of .285 (more than the 0.05 level of significance) shows that the independent variable does not significantly influence the dependent variable. The hypothesis is therefore accepted. This implies that parental conflict does not significantly influence academic performance in secondary schools in Federal Capital Territory Abuja.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant difference in their parental conflict and academic performance of male and female students.

**Table 4: t-test on Difference in Parental Conflict and Academic Performance of Male and Female Students**

	Gender	N	Mean	S.D	t-value	df	Sig(2-tailed)	Decision
<b>Parental Conflict</b>	Male	247	2.46	0.83	0.170	382	0.865	Accepted
	Female	137	2.45	0.72				
<b>Academic Performance</b>	Male	247	68.32	11.66	-0.131	382	0.895	Accepted
	Female	137	68.49	11.93				

The test on Table 4 was carried out to determine difference in parental conflict of secondary school students due their gender in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. A significant value of .865 (more than the 0.05 level of significance) shows that there is no significant difference. The hypothesis is therefore accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference in parental conflict due to gender of students. The table also determines difference in students’ academic performance in secondary school students due to their gender in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. A significant value of .895 (more than the 0.05 level of significance) shows that there is no significant difference. The hypothesis is therefore accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference in students’ academic performance due to gender of students in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

**Ho3:** There is no significant difference in parental conflict and academic performance of students on the basis of age.

**Table 5: One-way ANOVA for Difference in Parental Conflict and Academic Performance of Students on the Basis of Age**

Variable	Age	Sum of	Df	Mean	F	Sig	Decision
		Squares		Square			
<b>Parental Conflicts</b>	Between Groups	1.215	2	.608	.962	.383	Accepted
	Within Groups	240.652	381	.632			
	Total	241.867	383				
<b>Academic Performance</b>	Between Groups	211.847	2	105.923	.766	.466	Accepted
	Within Groups	52673	381	138.251			
	Total	52885	383				

As shown on Table 5, a one way ANOVA was carried out to determine difference in parental conflict on students on the basis of age. With significant value of .383 (more than the 0.05 level of significance), the researcher found that there is no significant difference in parental conflict on students on the basis of age. The hypothesis is therefore

accepted. Finally, on difference in students' academic performance due to age, the significant value of .466 (more than the 0.05 level of significance), shows that there is no significant difference in students' academic performance due to age. The hypothesis is therefore accepted.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The first major finding in this study indicated that the prevalence of parental conflict is low and academic performance is above average among senior secondary students in the FCT.

The second major finding reveal that parental conflict does not significantly influence students' academic performance in Senior secondary schools in the Federal capital territory. This finding does not rule out the possibility of parental conflict impact on students' academic performance, it is the level of influence which is not significant enough to determine the performance of students that we are talking about. This finding is in consonance with the finding of Markus and Ferdinand (2014), result shows that parental conflict in Corinthians province in Brazil is not significant enough to determine their academic outcome. They further stated that with the right attitude, habit, parental interest and commitment, it is their children's education and irrespective of the status of the relationship between them, they can still add value to the education of their children. The finding however, is in disagreement with the study of Shehu and Ezeoba 2019 who find a significant influence of parental conflict on the students' academic performance.

Another major finding in this study indicated that there is no significant difference between male and female students in parental conflict and academic performance. This implied that gender does not play a significant role in the influence of parental conflict on academic performance of senior secondary school students in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. This finding confirms the findings of Agharuwhe and Nkechi (2018), who reported that there is no significant difference between male and female academic adjustment and performance in secondary schools. Ngwoke and Ezeoba (2019) reported that male and female students can respond appropriately and adequately to academic adjustment and achievement provided that right opportunities and environment are given

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to both. The finding reported that the adjustment capacity and academic performance are not gender related. Obih (2016), result revealed that a significant difference does not exist in the male and female parental conflict academic adjustment and academic performance. The equivalence in the adjustment capacity and academic performance of male and female students suggested that activities produced similar results irrespective of gender. When learners engaged in activities that are meaningful to them both male and female students benefit equally.

Another major finding in this study indicates that there is no significant difference in parental conflict and academic performance on the basis of age. The finding is in agreement with the finding of Athur and Evans (2019) who reported there is no significant difference between parental conflict, students' adjustment and academic performance due to age. They reported that in-school adolescents do not differ significantly in their achievement to school and academic achievement irrespective of their age

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of the study was to investigate parental conflict as correlate of secondary schools students' academic performance in the FCT, Nigeria. The study concludes that there is low incidence of parental conflict and academic performance is strictly above average among senior secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The study also concludes that the influence of parental conflict on students' academic performance is low and insignificant and that, there is no significant difference between male and female students in parental conflict and academic performance. There is also, no significant difference in parental conflict and student's academic performance on the basis of age.

### **Recommendations**

The study recommends that parental conflict should be avoided among married couple due to the hazardous effect it may have on academic performance of their wards, it is insignificant in this study though. Parents should make effort to resolve marital conflict before it escalates into hostilities and violence. Child-parent attachment should be encouraged in families, which will influence the academic performance of their wards.

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Social workers working with family should organize educational seminars and sensitize on the impact of parental conflict on children in particular and their academic performance. Partners with marital issues should contact social workers and other family counselors for guidance with effective resolution and management strategies in order to improve students' academic performance.

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