

THE IMPACT OF FAMILY CONFLICTS ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN JOS NORTH, PLATEAU STATE

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Abstract

There is a rising issue in research and in the modern world about the role of family conflicts on the academic performance of students. The current study is based on the fact that children at primary levels are having a negative impact due to family conflicts. An increasing body of empirical evidences proved the lack of pupils' performance in schools especially those experiencing family conflicts and weak interpersonal relationships. This study examined the impact of family conflicts on students' academic performance in schools. The study used a sample of 50 pupils at the primary school level and also 50 teachers from the Jos North LGA. A quantitative instrument of data collection was used. Participants were given the

questionnaire, which they had to answer by giving responses. The results of the study proved that the family conflict did have a negative effect on the students' performance in schools. At the same time, their interpersonal relationships were also affected by the conflicts they were facing in their families. The research recommends that there is a need to make strong bonding between the students and their parents. There should be a positive role of counselors and teachers in the lives of students.

Keywords: Family conflicts, academic performance, interpersonal relationships

Introduction

The term family is the gateway contact to any person in the society. The family brings up a child or children in its position as the coordinator of their life cycle. The child in its social contract is trying to acquire an initial education and socialization from parents and other significant persons in the family as mentors. Therefore, family setting provides primary concepts of socialization in the society that make human behavioural theory complete. These are moral, social concept and environmental connotation (Arinola & Femi 2024). In our today's life, conflict occur in the family due to behavioural changes, it may come from both parents, in the case of lack of trust or shouldering of responsibility from the male counterpart. Therefore, conflict affects the life of a child or children through their educational pursuit and developmental stages of learning. For instance, Borst (2015) found that family conflicts can increase the likelihood of the children being affected negatively. These negative effects might lead to others, such as impacts on their attachment style, their future relationships, and also their academic progress at school or college. Children from conflicted families are also at high risk of being negatively affected psychologically and socially. It is difficult for them to develop relationships with their friends or family members, and they have

problems with settling down and with sleep disturbances, all of which mean they are likely to have lower performance at school (Reynolds et al., 2014).

Bandura (1989) pointed out that the family lays the psychological, moral, and spiritual foundation in the overall development of the child. Structurally, family/home is either broken or intact. A broken home which results from family conflict in this context is one that is not structurally intact, as a result of divorce, separation, death of one of parent and illegitimacy. According to Emery (2004), psychological home conditions arise mainly from illegitimacy of children, the label of adopted child, broken homes, divorce and parental deprivation. Such abnormal conditions of the home, are likely to have a detrimental effect on school performance of the child, he asserts.

According to Tilman (2007), studies carried out have shown that when one form of violence was found in the family, other forms were more likely to also occur and that violence in the family has a direct relationship to community violence and other forms of aggression and violence. Law enforcement in many countries will not intervene in what is often called "domestic quarrel" even though psychological research indicates that without such intervention, abusers are unlikely to seek help to stop their battering behaviour. Research has found a strong relationship between violence in the home and violence in the community. Golden (2000) reports that it has been found that prior history of abuse can increase the likelihood of abusive behaviour. According to Steinberg (1996), parental conflict and aggression or a conflict atmosphere in the home is related to offspring's

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personal or violent crimes.

According to Walker (1999), the presence of one form of domestic violence often correlates with the occurrence of other types of aggression and gender-based violence (GBV). Despite this, in several countries, including Russia, India, Colombia, Peru, and Chile, law enforcement agencies maintain a neutral stance in domestic violence cases, treating them as private family matters rather than criminal offenses (Time, 2022; HRW, 2018). This neutrality can discourage perpetrators from seeking treatment and perpetuate cycles of abuse. In these countries, the neutral or passive stance of law enforcement towards domestic violence cases contributes to a culture of impunity for abusers and discourages victims from seeking help. This environment not only perpetuates the cycle of abuse but also impedes efforts to address and decrease GBV effectively. Domestic violence and acts of terrorism on a larger scale have a substantial correlation. A history of abuse, according to Golden (2000), has been demonstrated to enhance a person's chance of becoming abusive. According to Steinberg (1996), personal or violent crimes committed by children are related to parental conflict and hostility, or a conflict-filled home environment.

Murphy and O'Farrell (1994) emphasized the critical role of parental involvement in the development of a child. Children would undoubtedly suffer as a result if parents continued to quarrel in their homes. Additionally, they said that children acquire abilities through copying and empathizing with people they like, such as their parents and other role models. Allowing their children to grow up in a violent atmosphere exposes them to the possibility of their own children perpetuating the cycle of abuse. Numerous social institutions, such as schools, businesses, and communities, have a direct impact on the well-being of children, but children and their families also interact with these institutions. When parents get active and teach their children, it benefits everyone. Parental participation has been related to long-term consequences for a child's behaviour.

Steinberg (1996) asserts that conflict is a necessary component of family functioning and has a stronger impact on a child's development than family structure does. He adds that the greatest tactics for fostering children's health and social development are love and at least a modicum of parental control. Children who have been neglected or mistreated for an extended length of time, according to Seifert and Hoffnung (1997), are under a considerable lot of stress. Additionally, parents and other caregivers often offer long-term support to their children at home and at school. Numerous educators feel that including parents in learning activities at home with

their children is critical for a child's development. Parents will be unable to spend meaningful time with their children if there is a schism within the family.

Males are more likely to use violence to achieve and retain power over others. Domestic abuse encompasses a broad variety of behaviors, including physical, sexual, and psychological abuse committed by one person against another in an intimate relationship in order to get an unfair advantage or to retain one person's power, control, and authority over the other Zhiwen, (2023). Berk (1999) observes that poor academic achievement is a prevalent symptom of child abuse and neglect. These young individuals often struggle with their capacity to deal with novel or stressful circumstances, social interactions, and problem solving. According to Harold et al. (2021), mistreated or neglected young children are more prone to become aggressive, while others are more likely to suffer from post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or severe depression.

Kiura, (as cited in Muhammed et al. 2022) states that, an excellent husband – wife relationship requires self-awareness, an understanding partner, a balance of individuality, joint participation, appropriate conflict management, sexual harmony, and exceptional competence in mutual argument and communication. Additionally, he believes that parents have a responsibility to teach, prepare, and lead their children so that they may take responsibility for their children's eternal fate. When parents do not get along, the children suffer as well. They carry their parents' burdens with them everywhere they go, from school to play dates with friends. The objectives of the paper are to:

- Evaluate the academic performance of students affected by family disputes or conflict.
- Explore the difficulties encountered by some students with classmates.
- Ascertain gender populist in Primary Schools of Jos North LGA.

Literature Review

According to Njeru, (as cited in Edmond et al. 2020), people get married with the hope of having a life-long satisfying union with their partner. They marry for love, for companionship, for friendship, for a family, for financial stability and for intimacy, among other reasons. The idea of staying married and having children while growing old together is the image most people who get married have. However, this is sometimes not the case, because marriage is no longer about family honour. People are getting married for the same reasons their parents did, but they are not the same people (Mukashema & Sapsford, 2013). Before now, marriage

was arranged on the basis of social status and interfamily relations, but it is now solely about personal happiness; this is why men and women are finding it easier to break up now.

Kiura, (as cited in Muhammed et al. (2022), notes that when two people start a family after marriage and take care of each other, they will be able to resolve their problem amicably. If the foundation of the marriage relationship is weak, then problems may exist. Some people treat marriage as a means of personal fulfilment. However, others may not (Cui & Fincham, 2010). In today's modern life, many women are bound to take care of their children without the support of their husband. Cui and Fincham further maintain that some people see marriage life as a form of dependence, especially for the woman. In the past, marriage was thought of as the vital rite of passage for which a girl was prepared from a tender age.

In this modern era, women are educated and they know that, as wives, they deserve respect and love from their partners. Bokea (2006) argues that in modern society, people have started to believe in separation and even divorce. Kithaka (2006) states that in the past, marriage life had a structure as well as a purpose due to the fact that when things fell apart, there was a formal way to pull them back together again. As per Kithaka, marriage was done for the purpose of fulfilling psychological needs, security, and companionship. Undoubtedly, the fundamental reasons why people get married have not changed with time, but the approach definitely has.

How the individual behaviour is influenced by family sharing a house with a group of individuals is not the sole aspect of family (Pruett & Cowan, 2017). Even when family members age, they retain connections to the group as a whole (Mazzetti, Schaufeli & Guglielmi, 2014). Rather than living alone, family members depend on one another. They value intangible needs such as sociability and a feeling of belonging equally as much as material ones (Baucom, Baucom & Christensen, 2015).

Kiura (1999) asserts that a child's perspectives, norms, and values are formed throughout time by what they learn from their parents. As a result, parents should provide an exemplary behaviour for their children to emulate. Britten and Britten (2004) advise parents to spend quality time with their children, to connect with them, and to demonstrate affection to them. As a parent, you owe it to your children to gain from the errors of others. Parents in today's culture are increasingly spending less time with their children. As a parent, you should set aside time to learn about your children's accomplishments and struggles. According to Kiura

(1999), there is evidence that children can detect whether their parents are in love if they see it between them. Additionally, he recommends that parents should explain to their children why they need to be beaten and to praise them more often than they punish them. Scientists have discovered a link between sorrow and one's social environment. This is particularly true in the domains of parental grieving and child adjustment (Turkheimer, Harden & Martin, 2012). Miscommunications between the school and parents, really have effects on the students' performance both academically and socially (Zhiwen, 2023).

Connection between parents and their children's social and educational life

Each child is unique in terms of temperament and behavioural features. It is vital to distinguish a child's behaviour from his or her parents' personality. Interpersonal relationships exist between parents and children (El-Sheikh, Keiley, Erath & Dyer, 2013). An "accepting parent," according to Jersild (1969), is a caring person who accepts their kid and is aware of their rights. Being accepted by others enables children to develop greater confidence and trust in those who love and care for them; they become more capable of showing love and affection to others; they develop the ability to grow, try new things, and communicate more effectively; and they develop a greater capacity to accept and love themselves. When someone rejects you, the following consequences occur: Children who lack the skill to defend themselves are unable to rely on their parents for protection and assistance (Hogan et al, 2014).

Reasons of conflict in families

When individuals are faced with physical or social stressors, their behavioural responses often lean toward conflict, a tendency that Lowry and Rankin (1977) associate with the strain such situations place on interpersonal dynamics. Conflict, in this sense, is not simply an emotional outburst but a discursive act – a way individuals negotiate meaning, assert power, and express dissatisfaction within relational contexts. Kwiek and Antonowitz (2013) support this interpretation, defining conflict as a manifestation of disagreement or struggle between individuals. This definition implies that conflict is communicatively constructed, arising not merely from the issues at hand, but from how these issues are framed, interpreted, and contested through interaction. Within such discourses, the language of blame, resistance, and emotional withdrawal often takes center stage, revealing that conflict is a product of both spoken and unspoken meanings shared within social exchanges.

Moreover, the way decisions are made or more critically, how they are communicated can spark contention. Even when the decision itself is neutral, a lack of participatory dialogue or foresight can generate resentment, as individuals perceive exclusion or undervaluation in the process. This communicative breakdown, marked by silence, defensiveness, or confrontational tone, is a key trigger for escalating disputes. Clark et al. (2014) highlight that the discursive consequences of unresolved anger within families manifested in the avoidance of responsibility, carelessness, unfaithfulness, and rejection are not isolated actions but communicative signals of deeper relational discord. These actions form a cycle of negative discourse that perpetuates emotional distance and reinforces conflictual narratives within the family unit.

Influence of family conflicts on children

Unresolved differences of opinion within families often escalate into persistent marital problems. Bernet, Wamboldt, and Narrow (2016), argue that conflict intensifies when emotional grievances are left unaddressed. These conflicts, whether frequent or occasional, serve as more than just interpersonal disruptions; they are discursive events that both test and reshape the very fabric of familial relationships. From a discourse analytical perspective, conflict in the family setting is not only about disagreement but about how issues are framed, communicated, and interpreted within social and emotional contexts. It functions as a negotiation of power, identity, and belonging, revealing the underlying struggle between autonomy and emotional closeness. In this sense, family conflict becomes a communicative battleground where relational meanings are constructed and contested.

Brody et al. (2013) further illustrate the diverse triggers of such conflicts, pointing to issues such as adultery, cultural tensions related to intermarriage, stigmatized conditions like HIV/AIDS and alcoholism, and communicative breakdowns such as gossip and financial disputes. These examples underscore that conflict is not merely a reaction to individual behaviours but is deeply rooted in the sociocultural and emotional narratives that circulate within families. The absence of forgiveness, for instance, signals a discursive rigidity and an unwillingness to renegotiate relational terms which can entrench children in cycles of emotional instability and fractured identity formation.

Moreover, children situated within such conflicted environments do not merely witness these interactions; they are embedded within the emotional and discursive structures they produce. The tension between parental

power struggles and the need for emotional closeness creates a communicative climate that shapes children's sense of self, security, and social orientation. Thus, the influence of family conflict on children is not solely psychological or behavioural it is also discursive, affecting how they internalize roles, interpret relationships, and engage with the world around them.

Relationship between family conflicts and academic performance

Family conflict, both direct and indirect, has been found to significantly influence the academic performance of students (Overbeek, de Schipper, Lamers-Winkelmann & Schuengel, 2012). Scholars generally agree that unstable family environments characterized by frequent conflicts, separation, or divorce tend to impair a child's psychological, emotional, and cognitive development, which in turn undermines academic outcomes (Fearon et al., 2015). This view is reinforced by Cumming (2014), who contends that children raised in conflict-free families demonstrate greater academic productivity compared to their counterparts from conflicted households. Similarly, Sherrill et al. (2017) affirm that lower parental involvement common in high-conflict families can significantly hinder a child's educational progress.

The literature further indicates that children in divorced or father-absent households often exhibit diminished cognitive and academic performance compared to children from intact families (McTavish, MacGregor, Wathen & MacMillan, 2016). This trend is corroborated by Arinola et al. (2024), who emphasize that both male and female students from separated families generally lag behind their peers from stable family units in terms of academic achievement. These studies collectively suggest that the structure and stability of the family unit play a foundational role in shaping children's educational outcomes.

Bulduc, Caron, and Logue (2012) add another dimension by examining the practical challenges such as financial instability and residential displacement that children from separated or divorced families may face, which further aggravates their academic struggles. Consistently, the work of Bulduc et al. (2011) supports the notion that both boys and girls from non-intact families encounter more academic difficulties than those from stable family backgrounds. However, not all scholars concur; Ross and Wynne (2010) present a contrasting perspective, arguing that the differences in academic performance between children from divorced and intact families are not always statistically significant. This divergence suggests the need to explore moderating variables such as resilience, quality of school support, or

the presence of extended family support systems.

Kwiek and Antonowitz (2013) offer empirical evidence from a large-scale descriptive study that utilized stratified random sampling to examine how family background characteristics including parents' marital status, educational level, and financial situation affect student performance. Their findings strongly reinforce the idea that stable family conditions positively correlate with better academic achievement. Additionally, Albright, Hilgeman, and Allen (2020) affirm that these background variables serve as essential predictors of student success. Zeting et al. (2022) extend the discussion by underscoring the critical role of the parent-child relationship in educational outcomes. They argue that closeness and guidance offered by parents, especially when aligned with educational policy and expectations, enhance a child's academic performance.

Findings reveal that family conflict, particularly in the form of divorce and separation, tend to negatively influence children's academic performance through diminished emotional support, financial instability, and reduced parental involvement. However, the divergence noted by Ross and Wynne (2010) invites further inquiry into contextual or individual factors that may buffer or exacerbate these effects.

Guidance and Counselling in Schools

Guidance and Counselling is referred to as a process of evaluation of human problems with the aim of providing a solution to their needs. According to Cowan et al. (as cited in Mohammad, 2020), guidance is defined as a constant process of identifying and addressing pupils' developmental needs at home and in the classroom. It includes teaching, counselling, and assisting a person in acting in accordance with their principles. Counselling is the ethical and professional use of human connection to facilitate the client's development of self-awareness, emotional acceptance, and personal progress. This tool has a variety of applications, including aiding in issue resolution and crisis management.

The common concepts of Guidance and Counselling

- a. Importance of Counselling: Counselling in schools play a crucial role in addressing student stress, depression, and academic performance issues.
- b. Role of Counsellors: Counsellors should focus on instilling positive behaviour and decision-making skills in students, creating a safe and supportive school environment, and providing guidance to students experiencing emotional distress.
- c. Support from Family: Family support is essential in helping students navigate difficult times and

enhancing their overall well-being and academic performance.

- d. Community Involvement: The community should provide empathy and advice to families in conflict, promoting traditional values like honesty and respect to prevent issues like alcohol abuse and irresponsibility that can impact families and children negatively.
- e. Professional Support: Intervention programmes aimed at improving academic performance should consider a family-oriented approach to identify adolescents from families with conflicts and provide them with professional support.

Research Methodology

For the purpose of this study, the researcher used 10 primary schools (LEA Tudun Wada, LEA Kabong, LEA Nassarawa Gwong, LEA Angwan Rogo, LEA Rikkos, LEA Sabo Layi, SDA Primary, St Theresa Boys, Methodist Primary and LEA Kasuwa Nama, all in Jos North), 50 teachers (5 from each selected schools) and 50 students (5 from each selected schools) to determine the results. However, the benefits of using quantitative methods are that they consume less time and are easy to administer to a large population of people. For instance, the use of the survey method suggests that it can be easily used to find the opinions of a large group of people in a short amount of time. The research also x-rays some few objectives to guide the study. The objectives are to evaluate the academic performance of students affected by family disputes or conflict, explore the difficulties encountered by some students among classmates and ascertain gender populist.

Results

Table 1: Evaluation of academic performance of students affected by family disputes or conflict

Level of Family conflict affect the academic performance of students	Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)
Agreed	80	80	100	100
Disagreed	20	20	100	100
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Field Survey

The table above indicates that 80 (80%) of the respondents agreed that family conflict really affects the academic performance of students in the primary school level as it is the beginning of learning process in human capacity in Jos North L.G.A. of Plateau State while 20

(20%) of the respondents were of the contrary view.

Table 2: Showing the difficulties encountered by some students among classmates in Primary Schools in Jos North L.G.A. of Plateau State

Students Responses

The difficulties encounter by some students with classmates	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency
Agreed	60	60	60
Disagreed	40	40	40
Total	100	100	100

Source: Field Survey

Table 2 reveals that 60 (60%) of the respondents agreed that some of the students face difficulties among their classmates due to the family conflict in the home; it also weighs them down in schools in Jos North L.G.A. Plateau State, while 40 (40%) had a contrary opinion that some of the students did not face challenges in the process of learning among their classmates in primary schools in the Local Government Area.

Table 3: Showing gender populist in Primary Schools of Jos North L.G.A., Plateau State

Level of Gender respondent	Male		Female	
	Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)
Male	15	15	85	85
Female	85			
Total	100		100	100

Source: Field Survey

Table 3 above reveals that 15 (15%) of the respondents were male from Primary Schools, while (85%) of the respondents were female. This is the majority in the interview of the research area.

Discussion

The research findings highlight the significance of this study, demonstrating its practical value for teachers, parents, and educational institutions. The results emphasize that the nature and intensity of family conflicts must be given serious consideration to protect students from their detrimental effects. These conflicts, if left unaddressed, can severely disrupt students' academic focus and emotional stability. To mitigate such impacts, parents must assume an active and nurturing role in their

children's lives. They should cultivate supportive relationships, spend meaningful time with their children, and provide the emotional care necessary for their development and academic success.

Simultaneously, schools should establish dedicated panels or intervention teams to identify and address cases related to family-induced distress among students. Such structures would help in the early detection and resolution of conflicts affecting learners. Efforts to create a safe, inclusive, and emotionally healthy school environment must be prioritized. Moreover, schools should ensure the availability of trained and experienced school counsellors equipped to handle the complex emotional and psychological needs of students.

Effective communication among parents, teachers, and counsellors is crucial in addressing and resolving issues that affect students' well-being and learning. A collaborative and harmonious relationship between these stakeholders is vital for developing holistic and individualized support strategies. School counsellors should be fully integrated into this support network, recognized as essential contributors to student development, and empowered to play a central role in promoting students' academic and emotional success.

Moreover, comparative study of different types of family conflict, intervention study on support programmes for students affected by family conflict, study on the impact of family conflict on students' mental health should be conducted in the future to help build on the findings of the current study and provide insights into the impact of family conflict on students' academic performance. Hence, such type of studies will be able to bring about sociological change and will be helpful for removing social problems from the society. In this way, parents should be cooperative, and they must take care of their children in the best manner. They should not throw away their responsibility entirely to the teachers, but must also play their part in a responsible manner. In addition, not only the causes of these conflicts must be explored, but the solutions to these problems also must be considered in order to overcome them. In this way, the environment at schools will be great and the students' performance in academics will be increased.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- Parents or guardians who are having family disputes should look into counselling alternatives as soon as possible to save their children from adverse impact and for their better grooming, and to adapt to communication skills to create a stable and

supportive home environment.

- Teachers and school administrators should be aware of the potential impact of family conflicts on students' academic Performance and provide support to students who may be struggling due to family conflicts.
- Government such as Ministry of Education, NGOs and international partners should provide training programmes for peer counsellors to enable them help their fellow students.
- The student should be recommended to seek guidance and counselling from experts in order to refrain from adverse consequences as soon as a problem is identified.
- Teachers should regularly plan parent's day where parents or guardians can visit the school and meet with the students to discuss their overall performance.
- There should be panels in schools to identify the cases of family disputes and accordingly an effort must be made to resolve these types of family disputes that will ultimately improve the overall performance of a child.
- For all instructors who lack basic training in guidance and counselling techniques, the Ministry of Education should implement in-service training in these subjects. This will provide the instructor the tools needed to deal with students that need help.
- Policy makers should design policies and programs that target family support and conflict resolution.
- Interventions that target family support and conflict resolution may be effective in improving student outcomes.
- Future research should explore the mechanisms by which family conflicts affect student outcomes and investigate effective interventions for addressing these conflicts.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that family conflicts have a significant impact on the academic performance of primary school students in Jos North, Plateau State. The findings suggest that students from households with high levels of conflict tend to perform poorly academically compared to their peers from households with low levels of conflict. The results of this study are consistent with previous researches that have shown that family conflicts can have negative effects on children's cognitive development, social-emotional well-being, and academic achievement.

The results of this study also highlight the importance of family relationships and the need for

parents to promote a positive and supportive home environment. Parents' ability to manage conflict and maintain a harmonious household can have a significant impact on their children's academic performance. The findings of this study suggest that parents should prioritize conflict resolution and communication skills to create a stable and supportive environment that fosters academic success.

Furthermore, the study highlights the need for policymakers and educators to consider the impact of family conflicts on students' academic performance when designing policies and programs aimed at improving education outcomes. Interventions that target family support and conflict resolution may be effective in improving student outcomes.

The study also suggests that teachers and school administrators should be aware of the potential impact of family conflicts on students' academic performance and provide support to students who may be struggling due to family conflicts. This may involve providing counselling services, academic support, or other forms of assistance to help students overcome the challenges associated with family conflicts.

The findings of this study underscore the importance of addressing family conflicts as a critical factor in promoting student success in primary schools in Jos North, Plateau State. By recognizing the impact of family conflicts on academic performance and taking steps to address these conflicts, we can work towards creating a more supportive and positive learning environment that fosters academic achievement and promotes overall well-being for all students.

Overall, this study highlights the importance of considering the social context in which students learn, including the impact of family conflicts on academic performance. By acknowledging and addressing these conflicts, we can work towards creating a more supportive and positive learning environment that promotes academic success for all students.

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