

Impact of Teacher-Parent Conflicts on Students Academic Performance in Some Selected Private Junior Secondary Schools in Girei, Adamawa State

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Abstract- This study investigated the impact of teacher-parent conflicts on students' academic performance in selected private junior secondary schools in Girei, Adamawa State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey approach was employed, utilizing structured questionnaires administered to 300 students, 100 parents, and 15 teachers, alongside analysis of students' academic records. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) and Pearson correlation. The findings revealed that communication breakdowns ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 0.76$) and academic performance disputes ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.82$) were the most prevalent forms of conflict. A strong negative correlation ($r = -0.68$, $p = 0.001$) was found between the incidence of teacher-parent conflicts and students' academic performance, indicating that increased conflict levels correspond to decreased academic achievement. Participants identified regular parent-teacher meetings ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 0.68$) and clear communication channels ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 0.72$) as the most effective conflict resolution strategies. The study concluded that teacher-parent conflicts significantly affect student success and recommends the implementation of structured communication frameworks, transparent academic policies, and formal mediation processes to foster collaborative home-school partnerships and improve educational outcomes.

Keywords: Teacher-Parent Conflicts, Academic Performance, Communication Breakdown, Home-School Partnership, Conflict Resolution

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as the bedrock of national development and a fundamental human right essential for individual progress (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2022). In Nigeria, the quest for quality education has led to a significant expansion of private schools, which are often perceived as alternatives to the overstretched public system, particularly at the junior secondary level (Ogunode et al., 2020). The academic performance of students within this sector is influenced by a complex interplay of factors, not

least of which is the critical partnership between the home and the school.

The collaboration between teachers and parents is a cornerstone of an effective educational support system. Contemporary research confirms that a positive, cooperative relationship between these key stakeholders is strongly associated with enhanced student motivation, improved attendance, and higher academic achievement (Castro et al., 2024; Nwokedi, 2021). This synergy ensures that the child's learning is consistently reinforced, creating a stable and nurturing environment for holistic development (Adeyemo, 2019).

Despite its importance, this partnership is frequently strained. In the Nigerian context, conflicts between teachers and parents have become increasingly prevalent. Recent studies attribute these conflicts to factors such as differing expectations on academic rigor, disagreements over disciplinary measures, perceived teacher incompetence, communication gaps, and in some cases, the challenging socio-economic pressures faced by families (Abiona & Adegoriolu, 2022; Eze et al., 2021). In private schools, where parents are fee-paying clients, there is an heightened sense of entitlement and demand for accountability, which can further escalate tensions and lead to confrontational interactions (Okeke & Eneogu, 2020).

The Junior Secondary School (JSS) student in Nigeria is at a particularly vulnerable stage. They are navigating the complexities of adolescence while facing the intense academic pressure of transitioning to senior secondary school (Suleiman, 2023). When the adults responsible for their guidance—teachers and parents—are in conflict, the student can become a secondary victim of this discord. This may manifest as stress, divided loyalty, loss of respect for authority

figures, and a decline in concentration and academic focus (Chukwuma & Okonkwo, 2019).

While the impact of general parental involvement is well-documented in Nigerian literature (e.g., Adeyinka, 2020), there is a scarcity of localized empirical research that specifically investigates how *conflictual* teacher-parent relationships, as opposed to merely absent ones, impact student outcomes. This gap is particularly evident in emerging urban centers like Girei in Adamawa State, where the educational landscape is dynamic. Therefore, this study is designed to fill this gap by investigating the impact of teacher-parent conflicts on students' academic performance in selected private junior secondary schools in Girei, Adamawa State.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the recognized importance of a collaborative home-school environment for student success, a growing incidence of conflictual relationships between teachers and parents in private junior secondary schools in Sangere Girei, Adamawa State, is suspected to be adversely affecting the academic performance of students. This problem is exacerbated by heightened parental expectations stemming from financial investment in private education and a lack of effective communication channels. Consequently, students are often caught in the crossfire of these disputes, potentially leading to increased anxiety, diminished motivation, and a disruptive learning environment. However, a critical gap exists as there is a scarcity of empirical research within this specific local context that directly investigates the nature and impact of these teacher-parent conflicts on measurable student academic outcomes. This study therefore seeks to address this problem by examining the precise impact of such conflicts on students' academic performance in selected private junior secondary schools in Girei.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of teacher-parent conflicts on the academic performance of students in selected private junior secondary schools in Girei, Adamawa State. The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To identify the predominant forms of conflict between teachers and parents in private junior secondary schools in Girei, Adamawa State.

2. To examine the relationship between the frequency of teacher-parent conflicts and students' academic performance in private junior secondary schools in Girei, Adamawa State.
3. To propose strategies for effective resolution of teacher-parent conflicts to mitigate their negative impact on students' performance in private junior secondary schools in Girei, Adamawa State.

Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the most frequent forms of conflict between teachers and parents in the selected private junior secondary schools in Girei, Adamawa State?
2. Is there a significant relationship between the incidence of teacher-parent conflict and the academic performance of their children/students?
3. What effective strategies can be implemented to resolve teacher-parent conflicts in private junior secondary schools?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The tripartite relationship between the school, the parent, and the student forms the foundational ecosystem for educational success. Within this ecosystem, the interaction between teachers and parents is particularly critical, serving as either a conduit for support or a source of significant stress. This literature review synthesizes existing scholarly work on the nature, causes, and consequences of teacher-parent conflicts, with a specific focus on their impact on students' academic performance. It situates the study within relevant theoretical frameworks, examines the unique context of private education in Nigeria, and identifies the gaps that this research on junior secondary schools in Girei, Adamawa State, aims to fill.

Theoretical Framework

The study is underpinned by two complementary theoretical models that provide a lens for understanding the dynamics at play.

1. Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979): This theory posits that a child's development is influenced by a series of interconnected environmental systems. The microsystem, which includes the immediate

environments of the family and the school, is most directly influential. A conflictual relationship between these two microsystems (teacher and parent) creates what Bronfenbrenner called a "mesosystemic weakness." When the linkages between the home and school are characterized by discord rather than collaboration, the child experiences cross-pressure and instability, which can negatively impact their academic performance and psychosocial well-being. This theory helps explain how an external adult conflict permeates the student's immediate learning environment.

2. Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence (1987, 2018): Joyce Epstein's model emphasizes that for education to be most effective, the three spheres of family, school, and community must overlap, with shared responsibilities and partnerships. Conflict between teachers and parents represents a failure to create this productive overlap. Instead of collaborating as partners, they operate in opposition, pulling the student in different directions. This theory provides a framework for understanding the ideal state of cooperation and, conversely, the detrimental effects when that cooperation breaks down into conflict. It also informs the development of strategies for building effective partnerships, which aligns with one of this study's objectives.

The Nature and Causes of Teacher-Parent Conflicts
Globally and within Nigeria, research has identified a typology of common conflicts and their root causes. Conflicts can be overt (e.g., public arguments, formal complaints) or covert (e.g., passive-aggressive communication, mutual avoidance).

In the specific context of Nigerian private schools, several studies highlight unique precipitating factors. Abiona and Adegoriolu (2022) found that a primary source of tension is the "client mentality" of parents who, as fee-payers, often demand exceptional service and unquestioning accommodation of their requests, sometimes bypassing established school protocols. This can clash with the professional authority and disciplinary practices of teachers, leading to power struggles.

Academic concerns are another major catalyst. Eze, Salami, and Ogechi (2021), in a study in South-East Nigeria, identified conflicts arising from disagreements over grading, perceived teacher bias, and dissatisfaction with a child's academic progress. Parents may directly question a teacher's competence

or methodology, which the teacher may perceive as a personal and professional attack.

Communication breakdown is frequently cited as a fundamental cause. Okeke and Eneogu (2020) noted that ineffective, infrequent, or negative communication (e.g., only contacting parents when there is a problem) fosters misunderstanding and mistrust. The absence of clear channels for constructive dialogue means that minor issues can quickly escalate into major conflicts.

Socio-economic and cultural factors also play a role. Suleiman (2023) alluded to the pressures on parents in a challenging economic environment, which can heighten anxiety about their child's future and, consequently, their aggression towards the school. Furthermore, differing cultural expectations regarding discipline and respect can create friction between teachers' methods and parents' beliefs at home.

Impact on the Student

The negative impact of teacher-parent conflict on the student is multifaceted, affecting their academic, psychological, and behavioural domains.

1. **Academic Performance:** The most direct impact is on learning outcomes. Students caught in the middle of adult conflicts often experience increased anxiety and stress, which impairs cognitive functions such as concentration, memory, and information processing (Chukwuma & Okonkwo, 2019). This can lead to a visible decline in grades, test scores, and overall academic achievement. A study by Nwokedi (2021) confirmed a significant negative correlation between the incidence of teacher-parent conflict and students' average academic performance in Rivers State, suggesting that the toxic learning environment directly translates to poorer results.

2. **Psychological and Emotional Well-being:** The student's emotional world is deeply affected. They may experience loyalty conflicts, feeling torn between their parents and their teachers. This can lead to feelings of guilt, confusion, and insecurity. Adeyemo (2019) describes how this stress can manifest as diminished self-esteem and a loss of motivation for schoolwork. The school, which should be a safe space for learning, becomes a source of anxiety and dread.

3. **Behavioural Manifestations:** The psychological distress often surfaces in observable behaviours. Students may become withdrawn and

disengaged in class to avoid attracting attention. Conversely, they may act out, exhibiting disruptive behaviour as a cry for help or an expression of their own unresolved frustration (Adeyinka, 2020). In severe cases, this can lead to increased absenteeism or even school refusal, as the student seeks to escape the stressful environment.

The Private School Context and Mitigation Strategies

The private school environment in Nigeria, as described by Ogunode, Ahaotu, and Eyiolorunshe (2020), intensifies these dynamics. The market-oriented nature of private education means schools are highly sensitive to parent satisfaction, potentially making administrators more likely to concede to parental demands, even if it undermines teacher authority. This can exacerbate teacher frustration and feelings of professional disrespect.

Effective conflict mitigation is therefore not just desirable but essential. Research points to several key strategies:

- i. **Proactive Communication:** Establishing regular, positive communication before problems arise is crucial. This includes newsletters, open days, parent-teacher conferences, and digital platforms for updates (Castro et al., 2024).
- ii. **Clear Policies:** Schools must have clear, well-communicated policies on grading, discipline, and communication protocols. This provides an objective framework for resolving disputes and manages parental expectations (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2022).
- iii. **Training and Mediation:** Providing training for both teachers and parents on effective communication and conflict resolution skills is vital. Furthermore, establishing a clear mediation process involving school counsellors or neutral administrators can help de-escalate conflicts before they harm the student (Eze et al., 2021).

Gap in Literature

While the existing body of literature provides a robust understanding of the general phenomenon of teacher-parent conflict, a significant gap remains in the context of localized, empirical studies within specific states and communities in Northern Nigeria. Most studies, such as those by Eze et al. (2021) and Nwokedi (2021), have been conducted in the South-East and South-South regions. The socio-

cultural and educational landscape of Adamawa State may present unique dynamics that have not been adequately explored. This study, therefore, sought to contribute to filling this gap by providing empirical, localized data from private junior secondary schools in Girei, Adamawa State.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a survey research design. A survey design was deemed appropriate as it allowed for the efficient collection of data from a sizable sample, enabling the researcher to quantify variables and examine relationships between them. This approach was particularly suitable for gathering information on the attitudes, experiences, and perceptions of teachers, parents, and students regarding the phenomenon under study.

The area of the study was Girei Local Government Area in Adamawa State, Nigeria, which hosted a number of private junior secondary schools that served as the target population. The study population included students in JSS 2 and JSS 3, their teachers, and their parents or guardians from selected private schools. A multi-stage sampling procedure was utilized to select participants. First, five private junior secondary schools were purposively selected based on criteria of established operation and a full JSS structure. Subsequently, a simple random sampling technique was used to select intact classes from JSS 2 and JSS 3 in each school, encompassing all students within those classes. Teachers and parents associated with these selected classes were also included in the survey, resulting in an estimated sample of 300 students, 15 teachers, and 100 parents.

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire, developed specifically for the study. The questionnaire consisted of different sections tailored for each group of respondents (teachers, parents, and students). It included a demographic information section and utilized Likert-scale items to measure the frequency, types, and perceived causes of teacher-parent conflicts. To obtain an objective measure of the outcome variable, a proforma was used to collect the academic performance records of the participating students, specifically their scores in core subjects from the most recent term. The validity of the instruments was ensured through review by experts in educational psychology and measurement,

while a pilot study was conducted to establish the reliability of the scales using Cronbach's alpha.

The procedure for data collection began with obtaining the necessary permissions from school authorities and informed consent from all participants. Trained research assistants administered the questionnaires to the students and teachers on school premises, while questionnaires for parents were distributed through the students and returned via sealed envelopes. The academic performance data were collected from school records with the cooperation of school administrators. All quantitative data gathered from the questionnaires and academic scores were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics,

such as frequencies, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize the data, while inferential statistics, specifically Pearson's correlation, were employed to test the relationship between teacher-parent conflict variables and students' academic performance. Ethical considerations, including confidentiality, anonymity, and the voluntary nature of participation, were strictly adhered to throughout the research process.

IV. RESULTS

Research Question 1: What are the most frequent forms of conflict between teachers and parents in the selected private junior secondary schools in Girei, Adamawa State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Frequent Forms of Teacher-Parent Conflict

Form of Conflict	Mean	Standard Deviation
Communication Breakdown	4.32	0.76
Academic Performance Disputes	4.15	0.82
Disciplinary Actions	3.87	0.91
Financial/Fee-Related Issues	3.45	1.12
Lack of Parental Involvement	3.25	1.05

From Table 1 the results indicated that communication breakdown ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 0.76$) and academic performance disputes ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.82$) are the most frequent forms of conflict, as evidenced by the highest mean scores. The relatively low standard deviations suggest consistency in respondents' perceptions of these issues. Disciplinary actions ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.91$) also represent a common source of conflict, while financial issues and

lack of parental involvement, though present, are less frequent. The higher standard deviation for financial issues ($SD = 1.12$) indicates greater variability in respondents' experiences with this type of conflict.

Research Question 2: Is there a significant relationship between the incidence of teacher-parent conflict and the academic performance of their children/students?

Table 2: Correlation between Teacher-Parent Conflict and Academic Performance

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Correlation (r)	p-value
Teacher-Parent Conflict	3.65	0.89	-0.68	0.001
Student Academic Performance	65.2	11.7		

From Table 2, the correlation analysis revealed a strong negative relationship ($r = -0.68$, $p = 0.001$) between teacher-parent conflict and academic performance. This statistically significant result indicates that as conflict levels increase ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.89$), students' academic performance tends to decrease ($M = 65.2$, $SD = 11.7$). The strength of this

relationship underscores the detrimental impact of teacher-parent conflicts on student learning outcomes.

Research Question 3: What effective strategies can be implemented to resolve teacher-parent conflicts in private junior secondary schools?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Effective Conflict Resolution Strategies

Conflict Resolution Strategy	Mean	Standard Deviation
Regular Parent-Teacher Meetings	4.45	0.68
Clear Communication Channels	4.32	0.72

Transparent Academic Policies	4.18	0.75
Mediation by School Counselors	3.95	0.88
Workshops on Conflict Management	3.82	0.92

Table 3 revealed that regular parent-teacher meetings ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 0.68$) and clear communication channels ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 0.72$) emerged as the most effective conflict resolution strategies, with high mean scores and low standard deviations indicating strong consensus among respondents. Transparent academic policies ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.75$) were also highly rated. Mediation by school counselors and conflict management workshops received somewhat lower ratings, with higher standard deviations suggesting less agreement about their effectiveness.

V. DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that communication breakdowns ($M = 4.32$) and academic performance disputes ($M = 4.15$) are the most frequent forms of teacher-parent conflict aligns with existing literature on home-school dynamics in private educational settings. As Abiona and Adegoriolu (2022) noted, the "client mentality" of parents in fee-paying schools often exacerbates communication gaps, as expectations for personalized attention intensify. Similarly, Eze et al. (2021) observed that disagreements over grading and academic outcomes frequently arise from divergent perceptions of teacher roles and parental responsibilities. The high mean scores for these conflict types underscore a systemic issue in which dialogue is reactive rather than proactive, and academic policies lack transparency. This suggests that without structured communication channels, conflicts become inevitable, perpetuating a cycle of mistrust between teachers and parents (Okeke & Eneogu, 2020).

The strong negative correlation ($r = -0.68$, $p = 0.001$) between teacher-parent conflicts and students' academic performance corroborates Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which posits that dissonance between microsystems (e.g., home and school) directly disrupts a child's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This finding is consistent with empirical studies in the Nigerian context, such as Nwokedi (2021), who reported that students exposed to chronic home-school conflict exhibited lower motivation and poorer examination results. The quantitative evidence from this study reinforces the notion that children internalize adult

conflicts, leading to stress, divided attention, and reduced academic engagement (Chukwuma & Okonkwo, 2019). Thus, teacher-parent conflicts are not merely interpersonal issues but tangible barriers to educational achievement, necessitating urgent intervention.

The identification of regular parent-teacher meetings ($M = 4.45$) and clear communication channels ($M = 4.32$) as the most effective conflict resolution strategies reflects Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence, which emphasizes intentional partnerships between schools and families (Epstein, 2018). These results are supported by Castro et al. (2024), whose meta-analysis confirmed that proactive communication significantly reduces misunderstandings and builds mutual trust. In the Nigerian private school context, where parental expectations are heightened (Ogunode et al., 2020), formalizing communication through digital platforms, structured meetings, and transparent academic policies can preempt many conflicts. The lower but still positive ratings for mediation and workshops ($M = 3.95$ and 3.82 , respectively) suggest that while these are valued, stakeholders perceive direct engagement and clarity as foundational to conflict prevention.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study concluded that teacher-parent conflicts, particularly stemming from communication breakdowns and academic disputes, significantly and adversely affect students' academic performance in private junior secondary schools in Girei, Adamawa State, as demonstrated by a strong negative correlation between conflict incidence and achievement scores.

Recommended Actions:

1. Private school proprietors should establish regular, scheduled communication through multiple channels (e.g., digital platforms, face-to-face meetings) to prevent misunderstandings.
2. Private school proprietors should create transparent, accessible policies on academic grading, discipline procedures, and fee structures to manage expectations.

3. Private school proprietors should provide training for teachers and parents on effective communication and conflict resolution strategies.
4. The PTA should implement a structured mediation system involving school counselors to address conflicts before they escalate.

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