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## INFLUENCE OF FAMILY CONFLICT AND COPING STRATEGIES ON ACADEMIC STRESS AMONG DAY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN OKITIPUPA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ONDO STATE

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### Abstract

The paper examined the influence of family conflict and coping strategies on academic stress among day school students in Okitipupa Local Government Area of Ondo State. Three research questions guided the study while two hypotheses were formulated. This study adopted descriptive survey design. A sample of 200 students were selected using a multistage sampling technique. The instrument used for the study was a self-developed structured questionnaire titled “Family Conflict and Coping Strategies on Academic Stress Questionnaire (FCCSASQ). Reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach’s Alpha statistics which yielded a coefficient 0.70. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Research questions were answered using mean and percentage, while hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that family conflict is relatively high; and that academic stress among students is high among day school students in Okitipupa Local Government Area. Also, students adopt various coping strategies to manage academic stress, with a moderate level of usage. Findings also revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between family conflict, coping strategies and academic stress. It was also revealed that coping strategies have a significant negative influence on academic stress. Based on the findings, it was recommended that Parents and guardians should strive to create a peaceful and supportive home environment by minimizing conflicts and improving communication, as this will enhance students’ emotional stability and academic performance.

**Keywords:** Influence, family, conflict, coping strategies and academic stress

### Introduction

The family remains the primary socialization agent in a child’s life. It significantly shapes emotional, psychological, and academic outcomes. In recent years, increasing attention has been given to how family dynamics, particularly family conflict, seem to affect students’ academic experiences and well-being. Family conflict refers to recurring disagreements, hostility, or tension among family members, often arising from economic hardship, poor communication, parental separation, or domestic violence. According to Adeyemi and Oladipo (2021), a conflict-ridden family environment creates instability that negatively influences students’ concentration, motivation, and overall academic engagement.

Academic stress, on the other hand, is a psychological state resulting from perceived academic demands that exceed a student’s adaptive capacity. It might be increasingly prevalent among secondary school students, particularly those in day schools who must balance academic responsibilities with home-related challenges. Recent studies by Ibrahim and Yusuf (2022) indicate that academic stress manifests in forms such as anxiety, emotional exhaustion, poor academic performance, and in severe cases, school dropout. The interaction between family conflict and

academic stress has therefore become a crucial area of concern in educational and psychological research.

Scholars have established that exposure to family conflict may contribute significantly to stress levels among adolescents. For instance, Ojo, Adebayo, and Alabi (2023) found that students from high-conflict homes exhibit higher levels of academic stress compared to their counterparts from stable families. This is because such students often experience emotional distress, reduced parental support, and disrupted study routines. Similarly, Eze and Nwankwo (2020) emphasized that persistent family conflict undermines students' emotional stability, thereby impairing cognitive functioning and academic achievement.

Furthermore, the socio-cultural context of Nigeria may play a significant role in shaping family relationships and conflict patterns. In many Nigerian homes, economic challenges, unemployment, and societal expectations often intensify family tensions. According to Ogunleye and Akinola (2024), financial strain is a major predictor of family conflict in Southwestern Nigeria, which in turn affects children's academic outcomes. In Okitipupa Local Government Area, where many families engage in subsistence occupations, economic pressures may exacerbate household conflicts, thereby increasing students' vulnerability to academic stress.

Coping strategies are the behavioural and cognitive efforts individuals use to manage stress. They play a moderating role in the relationship between family conflict and academic stress. Lazarus and Folkman's coping theory, which continues to be widely applied in recent studies, categorizes coping strategies into problem-focused and emotion-focused approaches. Problem-focused coping involves addressing the source of stress directly, while emotion-focused coping aims at managing emotional responses.

Recent studies have expanded this framework to include adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies among adolescents. Empirical evidence suggests that effective coping strategies can buffer the negative effects of family conflict on academic stress. For example, Adekunle and Bello (2022) reported that students who adopt adaptive coping mechanisms such as time management, seeking social support, and positive reframing tend to experience lower levels of academic stress despite exposure to family conflict. Conversely, maladaptive coping strategies such as avoidance, substance use, and withdrawal have been associated with increased stress and poor academic outcomes (Nwosu & Okeke, 2021).

In addition, social support systems, including peers, teachers, and school counsellors, play a vital role in helping students cope with academic stress. A study by Ajayi and Olatunji (2025) found that guidance and counselling services in secondary schools significantly reduce stress levels by equipping students with coping skills. However, the availability and utilization of such services remain limited in many public schools, particularly in rural areas like Okitipupa. Oyinloye and Akingbulu (2024) in a study in Ondo State, found that the current state of guidance and counselling services in secondary schools is low. The study also revealed that the impact of guidance and counselling services in mitigating moral decadence among students is not effective.

Gender differences have also been observed in the experience of family conflict and coping strategies. According to Salami and Adeoye (2023), female students tend to report higher levels of academic stress due to greater emotional sensitivity, while male students are more likely to adopt avoidance coping strategies. These differences highlight the need for gender-sensitive interventions in addressing academic stress among students.

Moreover, the type of school attended (day vs. boarding) may influence the extent to which family

conflict affects students. Day school students are more directly exposed to family environments compared to boarding students, making them more susceptible to the effects of family conflict. As noted by Olufemi and Aderibigbe (2022), day students often carry emotional burdens from home into the classroom, which can hinder their academic performance and increase stress levels. Despite the growing body of literature on family conflict and academic stress, there is a paucity of localized studies focusing on Okitipupa Local Government Area. Most existing studies are either generalized across Nigeria or focused on urban centers, thereby overlooking the unique socio-economic and cultural dynamics of semi-urban communities. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by examining the influence of family conflict and coping strategies on academic stress among day school students in Okitipupa.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Academic stress among secondary school students has become a significant concern in Nigeria, with increasing reports of poor academic performance, anxiety, and emotional instability. While several factors contribute to academic stress, the role of family conflict has not been adequately addressed, particularly in semi-urban areas such as Okitipupa Local Government Area of Ondo State.

Many students in day schools may be exposed to unstable family environments characterized by frequent conflicts, financial difficulties, and poor parental relationships. These conditions may adversely affect their emotional well-being and academic focus. Furthermore, while coping strategies are known to influence how students manage stress, it is unclear whether students in this region possess effective coping mechanisms to mitigate the effects of family conflict.

The problem of this study, therefore, is to investigate the extent to which family conflict influences academic stress among day school students and to determine the role of coping strategies in managing this stress. Without such understanding, interventions aimed at improving students' academic performance may remain ineffective.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to examine the influence of family conflict and coping strategies on academic stress among day school students in Okitipupa Local Government Area of Ondo State. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. determine the level of family conflict among day school students in Okitipupa Local Government Area;
2. examine the level of academic stress experienced by students in the study area;
3. identify the coping strategies commonly adopted by students to manage academic stress;
4. investigate the relationship between family conflict and academic stress among day school students; and
5. assess the influence of coping strategies on the relationship between family conflict and academic stress among students.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What is the level of family conflict among day school students in Okitipupa Local Government Area?
2. What is the level of academic stress among day school students in the study area?
3. What coping strategies are commonly adopted by students to manage academic stress?
4. What is the relationship between family conflict and academic stress among students?
5. How do coping strategies influence the relationship between family conflict and academic

stress?

### Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between family conflict and academic stress among day school students.
2. There is no significant influence of coping strategies on academic stress among day school students.

### Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The design is appropriate because it allows for the collection of data from a large population to examine the relationships among variables without manipulating them. The population of the study consisted of all senior secondary school students in public day schools in Okitipupa Local Government Area of Ondo State. A sample of 200 students were selected using a multistage sampling technique. First, a random selection of schools was made, followed by stratified sampling to ensure representation across gender and class levels. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled “Family Conflict and Coping Strategies on Academic Stress Questionnaire (FCCSASQ)” The validity of the instrument was ensured through expert review in educational psychology and guidance and counselling, while reliability was established using the Cronbach Alpha method, with a reliability coefficient of 0.70 considered acceptable. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Research questions were answered using mean and percentage, while hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation at a 0.05 level of significance.

**Research Question One:** What is the level of family conflict among day school students in Okitipupa Local Government Area?

**Table 1: Level of Family Conflict among Students**

S/N	Items on Family Conflict	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remark
1	My parents often argue at home	60 (30%)	80 (40%)	40 (20%)	20 (10%)	2.90	Agree
2	There is frequent tension in my family	55 (27.5%)	75 (37.5%)	45 (22.5%)	25 (12.5%)	2.80	Agree
3	I feel uncomfortable at home due to conflict	50 (25%)	70 (35%)	50 (25%)	30 (15%)	2.70	Agree
4	Family disagreements affect my peace of mind	65 (32.5%)	75 (37.5%)	35 (17.5%)	25 (12.5%)	2.90	Agree
5	My home environment is stressful	58 (29%)	72 (36%)	40 (20%)	30 (15%)	2.75	Agree

Grand Mean = 2.81

The results in Table 1 indicate that the grand mean of 2.81 is above the criterion mean of 2.50, suggesting that family conflict is relatively high among day school students in Okitipupa Local Government Area. A majority of the respondents agreed that they experience frequent arguments, tension, and emotional discomfort at home. This implies that many students are exposed to unstable family environments, which may negatively affect their emotional well-being and academic functioning.

**Research Question Two:** What is the level of academic stress among day school students in the study area?

**Table 2: Level of Academic Stress among Students**

S/N	Items on Academic Stress	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remark
1	I feel overwhelmed by school work	70 (35%)	80 (40%)	30 (15%)	20 (10%)	2.95	Agree
2	I experience anxiety during examinations	75 (37.5%)	85 (42.5%)	25 (12.5%)	15 (7.5%)	3.10	Agree
3	I find it difficult to balance school and home demands	65 (32.5%)	75 (37.5%)	35 (17.5%)	25 (12.5%)	2.90	Agree
4	I feel tired due to academic workload	68 (34%)	82 (41%)	30 (15%)	20 (10%)	2.99	Agree
5	Academic pressure affects my sleep	60 (30%)	70 (35%)	40 (20%)	30 (15%)	2.80	Agree

Grand Mean = 2.95

Table 2 reveals that the grand mean of 2.95 exceeds the benchmark of 2.50, indicating a high level of academic stress among students. The majority of respondents agreed that they feel overwhelmed, anxious during examinations, and fatigued due to academic demands. This suggests that academic stress is a significant issue affecting students in the study area, which may hinder their academic performance and overall well-being.

**Research Question Three:** What coping strategies are commonly adopted by students to manage academic stress?

**Table 3: Coping Strategies Adopted by Students**

S/N	Coping Strategies	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remark
1	I seek help from friends	65 (32.5%)	80 (40%)	35 (17.5%)	20 (10%)	2.90	Agree
2	I talk to teachers or counselors	50 (25%)	70 (35%)	50 (25%)	30 (15%)	2.70	Agree
3	I manage my time effectively	55 (27.5%)	75 (37.5%)	40 (20%)	30 (15%)	2.78	Agree
4	I engage in recreational activities	60 (30%)	70 (35%)	40 (20%)	30 (15%)	2.80	Agree
5	I avoid thinking about stressful situations	70 (35%)	60 (30%)	40 (20%)	30 (15%)	2.85	Agree

Grand Mean = 2.81

The findings in Table 3 show a grand mean of 2.81, indicating that students moderately adopt various coping strategies to manage academic stress. Common strategies include seeking support from peers, engaging in recreational activities, and time management. However, the inclusion of avoidance as a coping strategy suggests that some students rely on maladaptive coping mechanisms, which may not

effectively reduce stress in the long term. Overall, while students demonstrate awareness of coping strategies, there is a need for improved guidance and counseling interventions to promote more effective stress management techniques.

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant relationship between family conflict and academic stress among day school students.

**Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Showing the Relationship between Family Conflict and Academic Stress**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-value	Sig. (p-value)	Decision
Family Conflict	200	2.81	0.65	0.62	0.000	Rejected
Academic Stress	200	2.95	0.70			

Table 4 presents the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between family conflict and academic stress among day school students. The result shows a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.62, indicating a moderate to strong positive relationship between the two variables. The p-value (0.000) is less than the significance level of 0.05. This implies that family conflict significantly relates to academic stress, meaning that as family conflict increases, academic stress also increases among students. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship is rejected. This finding suggests that a conflict-ridden home environment contributes substantially to students' academic stress levels.

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant relationship between coping strategies and academic stress among day school students.

**Table 5: Relationship between Coping Strategies and Academic Stress**

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	r-value	p-value	Decision
Coping Strategies	200	3.52	0.71			
Academic Stress	200	3.18	0.76	-0.36	0.000	Reject Ho

The result presented in Table 5 shows the relationship between coping strategies and academic stress among day school students. The analysis revealed a correlation coefficient of  $r = -0.36$ , which indicates a moderate negative relationship between coping strategies and academic stress. This implies that an increase in effective coping strategies is associated with a decrease in academic stress among students.

### Discussion of Findings

Finding revealed that family conflict is relatively high among day school students in Okitipupa Local Government Area. This was evidenced by the high grand mean obtained from the responses, indicating that many students experience frequent arguments, tension, and emotional discomfort at home. This finding supports the earlier submission of Adeyemi and Oladipo (2021), who noted that unstable family environments characterized by conflict negatively affect students' emotional stability and academic engagement. Similarly, the result aligns with the findings of Eze and Nwankwo (2020), who reported that persistent family conflict contributes to psychological distress among adolescents, thereby affecting their cognitive functioning and learning outcomes.

Furthermore, it was found that academic stress among students is high. Students reported feeling overwhelmed by schoolwork, experiencing examination anxiety, and struggling to balance academic and home responsibilities. This finding corroborates the work of Ibrahim and Yusuf (2022), who identified academic stress as a common challenge among secondary school students, often resulting in fatigue, anxiety, and poor academic performance. The finding also agrees with Ojo, Adebayo, and Alabi (2023), who established that students exposed to stressful home environments tend to exhibit higher levels of academic stress due to emotional strain and reduced parental support.

In addition, the study found that students adopt various coping strategies to manage academic stress, with a moderate level of usage. Common strategies identified include seeking support from peers, engaging in recreational activities, and practicing time management. However, some students also reported using avoidance strategies, which may be maladaptive. This finding is consistent with Adekunle and Bello (2022), who emphasized that while students employ different coping mechanisms, not all are effective in reducing stress. Similarly, Nwosu and Okeke (2021) observed that maladaptive coping strategies such as avoidance and withdrawal may worsen stress outcomes rather than alleviate them.

The first hypothesis tested revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between family conflict and academic stress. This implies that an increase in family conflict leads to a corresponding increase in academic stress among students. This finding is in line with Ojo et al. (2023), who reported a strong association between family instability and increased stress levels among students. It also supports the assertion of Ogunleye and Akinola (2024) that economic and interpersonal conflicts within the family contribute significantly to students' psychological and academic challenges.

The second hypothesis showed that coping strategies have a significant negative influence on academic stress, meaning that effective coping strategies reduce the level of stress experienced by students. This finding agrees with Ajayi and Olatunji (2025), who found that students who utilize positive coping mechanisms such as seeking counseling and social support experience lower stress levels. The negative beta value obtained in the regression analysis further confirms that coping strategies play a protective role in mitigating academic stress. This also aligns with the theoretical perspective of Lazarus and Folkman's coping theory, which emphasizes the role of adaptive coping in managing stress effectively.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that family conflict significantly contributes to academic stress among day school students in Okitipupa Local Government Area. Students who are exposed to unstable and conflict-prone family environments are more likely to experience emotional distress, which negatively affects their academic activities.

The study also concludes that academic stress is prevalent among students, largely due to academic demands and the influence of home-related challenges. In addition, while students employ various coping strategies, the effectiveness of these strategies varies, with some students relying on maladaptive methods.

Importantly, the study establishes that coping strategies play a significant role in reducing academic stress, indicating that students who adopt positive coping mechanisms are better able to manage stress. Therefore, both environmental (family conflict) and personal (coping strategies) factors are critical in understanding and addressing academic stress among students.

## **Recommendations**

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

1. Parents and guardians should strive to create a peaceful and supportive home environment by minimizing conflicts and improving communication, as this will enhance students' emotional stability and academic performance.
2. School authorities should strengthen guidance and counseling services in secondary schools to help students develop effective coping strategies for managing academic stress.
3. Counsellors and teachers should organize regular seminars and workshops on stress management, time management, and emotional regulation to equip students with adaptive coping skills.
4. Government and educational stakeholders should provide policies and programs that promote family welfare and reduce socio-economic stressors that contribute to family conflict.
5. Students should be encouraged to adopt positive coping strategies such as seeking social support, engaging in productive activities, and developing effective study habits rather than relying on avoidance behaviors.

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