

INTER-PARENTAL CONFLICT AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AMONG ADOLESCENTS OF HIGH SCHOOLS IN BANDAR ABBAS, IRAN

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This research was conducted with two objectives, to identify level of inter-parental conflict problems face by high school students in Bandar Abbas, and to investigate the relationship between level of inter-parental conflict and academic achievements among high schools students in Bandar Abbas. Participants consisted of 248 adolescent aged 17-18 who study in 3rd level and pre-university. A 27 items questionnaires was employed to measure inter-parental-conflict (including four dimensions parent-parent conflict, mother-child conflict, father-child conflict, problems in school). CGPA was used to measure academic achievement. The data were examined quantitative using, one sample t-test, and Spearman correlation. Results indicated that students of high schools in Bandar Abbas were faced by high level of inter-parental conflict, and a significant negative relationship between academic achievement and all dimensions of inter-parental conflict dimension.

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1. Introduction

In the history of Iran, some factors made difficulties to the family such as: social crises and societal changes such as invasions, wars, revolutions, westernization and modernizations. Some changes can be seen in real life of the Iranian family, but as an organization, the family has stayed complete and keeps on playing an important role in the daily activities of the society and in the lives of the members of the family. Definitely, in Iranian society, children are always in the center of family organization. Nowadays, the Iranian family emphasis on high education of children, desire for high educational success for adolescents. For achieving this education successes, adolescents need a quiet environment to improve their knowledge. Supporting children with an environment, in which they feel physically and psychologically safe is really important for their well-being and it must be high priority. Unfortunately, the conflict between parents is also not a new issue. The issue of parental conflict has been increasingly recognized as a persistent social and public problem. Particularly, this conflict has tremendous negative effects on adolescent's performance and well-being. Based on several studies, it is reported that about 38% of the population faces family conflict in Iran (Faramarzi, Esmailzadeh & Mosavi, 2005; Ghazizadeh, 2005). Therefore, the families which have conflict between parents, children are more likely to have emotional, social and behavior problems as well as difficulties with concentration and educational achievement.

Family conflict creates more destructive consequences for adolescents. Previous studies have shown that adolescents who faced by high level of parental fight, have higher inclinations of academic problems as compared to others (Amato & Cheadle, 2008). After facing several examples of parental conflict, some of those adolescents give up going to their schools (Ghazarian & Buehler, 2010). According to Amato and Cheadle (2008) there is a positive connection between high levels of family conflict and children's problems. Thus, it can be concluded that the students who faced conflict at home, can also have problems in school.

It is clear that different family environment creates distinct achievement for adolescent. The physical and psychological structure of the home can impact adolescent's behavior and attitude, which are developed by what the adolescents see, view, and experience at home. Thus, it is the home environment which affects the psychology of the adolescents (Ou & Reynolds, 2008; Amato & Cheadle, 2008; Turner, Chandlle & Heffer, 2009). Apart from the adolescents' psychology aspect, another aspect that can be easily influenced by the family environment is academic achievement. This viewpoint is supported by Bahrassa, Syed, Su & Lee (2011), Dotterer, Hoffman, Crouter & McHale (2008), and Ghazarian & Buehler (2010). They reported that home environment has a significant influence on adolescents' academic achievement (Sawari, Ghazali & Mansor, 2015). Similarly, research by Sun & Li, (2002), expose that Youth from high conflict homes will have potential to get poor grade result in examination.

The term "inter-parental conflict" refers to the parents' extraction, it happens when their physical and psychological availability are reduced (Cummings & Davies, 2002). Moreover, Cumming and Davies (2002) mentioned that parents will receive negative feedback from their children. Conflict is a negative mechanism that can damage parent-child relationship (Kelly, 2000; Amato, 2003; Kelly & Emery, 2003; Guttman & Rosenberg, 2003;

Grych, 2005). Thus, family with conflict cause to unrecognized their children's ability so they are not able to answer to their emotional needs that may be impact on adolescent's behaviour negatively. When the family is close to their children, they can guide them to achieve their goals in education.

2. Statement of the Problem

Conflict is considered as a global issue because it causes to collapse and threaten man's life and health. Conflict is a hidden and constant epidemic. Even increasing conflict in public places has created a lot of psychiatrists, sociologists and criminologists deeply troubled. Family conflict affects much more than the outside conflicts because family is the essential core of the society as well as the centre of mental health and reliability. It has an important role in the adolescent's character formation and it cannot be replaced with other connections. (Hesami, Doulatian, Shams & Alavi Majd, 2010).

Moreover, adolescents can be harmed, by conflicts and struggle between their parents. Domestic conflict is a public health problem, because it influences on the individual's health and welfare as well as breeding the adults (Huang, Wang & Warrenner, 2010; Vameghi, Feizzadeh, Mirabzadeh & Feizzadeh, 2010). Studies have shown that those children who observed domestic conflict may experience behavioural problems (e.g., stroke, escaping from school), affective problems (e.g., anxiety, depression, low self-esteem), cognitional problems (e.g., poor performance of the university) and physical problems (e.g., insomnia, weak motor skills) (Haj-Yahia, 2001; Evans, Davies & DiLillo, 2008; Holt, Buckley & Whelan, 2008).

A lot of researches have been done regarding the effects of family conflict on adolescent's interpersonal, social and academic adjustment (Ghazizadeh, 2005; Sun & Li, 2002; Amato & Cheadle, 2008; Ghasemi, 2010; Neghabi & Rafiee, 2013). According to O'Keefe (1994) parental conflict can affect adolescent's life and they are at greater risk for internalizing, externalizing, academic problems, and social capability problems as well. In fact, inter-parental conflict leads to youth behavioural problems and diminishes closeness in parent-child and sibling relationships (Ghazarian & Buehler, 2010). Some researchers reported that, adolescents who experience inter-parental conflict are more likely to show lower academic success (Haj-Yahia & Zoysa, 2008; Maina, 2010; Parsa, Nor Yaacob, Rof Redzuan, Parsa & Sabour Esmaeili, 2014).

Currently, the negative effects of family conflict on adolescent academic achievement have become a serious issue in Iran. According to Statistical Center of Maina (2010) the largest group of society was among the adolescence. The Iranian population who were between 15-29 years old are more than 35 per cent (cite in, Ghafari & Ghasemi, 2007). Another study by Ghasemi (2010) and Neghabi and Rafiee (2013) reported that the students who suffered from personal problem like low academic achievement and family problem consisted of 22 per cent of students in Iran. Previous studies (Azimi, Jannati, & Mahmoudi, 2002; Sadeghian & Heidarian, 2009) found an increasing number of psychological problems among college students as compared to those who do not continue college education. In Iran, due to studies incidence of domestic conflict is 38 per cent, physical conflict is 15 per cent, sexual violence is 42.4 per cent, and affective- mental violence is 81.5 per cent (Faramarzi, Esmailzadeh, & Mosavi, 2005; Ghazizadeh, 2005). In Iran, there are numerous research have

been done about the relation between parenting style and academic achievement (Parsasirat, Montazeri, Yusooff, Subhi & Nen, 2013), And some have been done in relationship between divorce and academic achievement (Sabour Esmaeili, Yaacob, Juhari & Mansor, 2011). However, the number of Iranian studies about the relationship between inter-parental conflict and academic achievement in high school are not enough (Tahmassian, 2006; Parsasirat et al., 2013), most of them have been done in Tehran, Mashhad, Qazvin, and Hamedan (Tahmassian, 2006; Parsaian et al., 2013; Sajadi, Rahimy, Rafiey & Vameghi, 2014; Mazaheri, Sadeghi & Heidari, 2011; Sabour Esmaeili et al., 2011; Gharehbaghy & vafaie 2008). Thus, there is a lack of research on the impact of inter-parental conflict and academic achievement among adolescents of high schools in Bandar Abbas-Iran. Therefore, this present study will focus on inter-parental conflict and adolescent's academic achievement in high schools in Bandar Abbas

3. Literature Review

The term 'conflict' is derived from the Latin word 'confligere' meaning 'to strike together'. Conflict may occur when two or more different things move to occupy the same space at the same time (Wright, 1990). Laue (1990) expressed that conflict appears when a group struggle to get an agreement for their wants, needs as well as their beliefs. Chung and Megginson (1981) and Dubrin (2005) mentioned that conflict happens when disagreements exist over issues of substance, or when emotional resentments lead to resistances between two people or groups. They agreed that conflict can continue when either side does not want to accept a certain agreement. According to Rahim (2001) conflict will appear in different forms, (1) dyadic conflict that can happen between two persons, and (2) coalition conflict, involving more than two parties.

Organizational conflict occurs at several levels and appears in different forms (Champoux, 2003). Rahim (2001) explained organizational conflict is of two types; Intra-organizational conflict, which occurs within organizations, and inter-organizational conflict, which occurs between two or more organizations, including family. Inter-parental conflict relates to parents' withdrawal that can damage physical and psychological relationship between parents and their children (Cummings & Davies, 1994). Inter-parental conflict negatively affects family environment and adolescent behavior (Grych & Fincham, 1993; Oh, Lee & Park 2011).

Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1989), emphasizes that parents can be a model for their children. In social forming, adolescent usually see and copy their parents' behavior. Then, they will have the same behavior to others (Pryor & Pattison, 2007). According to attachment theory, inter-parental conflict is related to child maladjustment via its relation to insecure parent-child attachment (Davies, Harold, Goeke-Morey & Cummings, 2002). As children grow up into adolescents, this insecure attachment is expressed as anxious ambivalence (Belsky, 2002). Reese-Weber and Kahn, (2005) found that late adolescents observe how parents engage and resolve conflicts. Therefore, they will have the same action and behavior to their siblings and even parents. Research by Sergin, Taylor, and Altman (2005), Platt, Nalbone, Casanova, and Wetchleret (2008), and Collin and Dozois, (2008) showed that inter-parental conflict can have a strong negative psychosocial effect on adolescent such as depression, low self-efficacy and self-esteem (Burns & Dunlop, 2002).

This harsh discipline and inadequate supervision coming from inter-parental conflict. This behavior also may affect the quality of the parent-adolescent relationships (Tillman, 2007; Wolf & Foshee, 2003). Based on Buehler, Lange and Franck (2007) reporting low independency and confidence can be accepted for those who get less parental support. It indirectly develop parent-child conflict (Risdal & Singer, 2004; Grych & Fincham, 1990). When children faced conflict it will influence their behavior through modeling and experience stress (Moura, Santos, Rocha & Matos, 2010).

Moreover, Markiewicz, Doyle and Brendgen (2001) showed the effect of inter-parental conflict in family environment negatively. Inter-parental conflict reduced mothers' effectiveness and responsiveness toward adolescents and marginalized fathers from their children. Therefore, parents' emotional and physical availability will be reduced. In addition, past studies have shown that maternal and paternal attachments are positively related to adolescent's emotional adjustment (Rice, Cunningha, & Young, 1997) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986, 1997; Malinckrodt, 1992). However, inter-parental conflict is related to low self-efficacy (Canary & Canary, 2013; Weber & O' Brien, 1999) and the higher levels of interpersonal and social problems (Endler, Speer, Johnson & Flett, 2001; Kolb & Griffith, 2009; Rynn, Vidair & Blackford, 2012). The empirical evidence suggests that perceptions of inter-parental conflict and parental attachment are related to one another (Amato & Sobolewski, 2001; Davies & Cummings, 1994), and the interaction between these two constructs may affect adolescent's self-efficacy (Bandura, 1989).

It can be concluded that, conflict is bound to be worse between people with stronger emotional intimacy. Many people engaged in conflict mainly because they do not employ good decision-making procedures. Fighting is an issue of power-sharing. Everyone would like to get his or her own way and nobody is willing to give up. Conflict in the family could result in avoiding responsibility, neglect, thoughtlessness, unfaithfulness and rejection. Generally, marital conflict arises due to differences in perceptions, ideals, principals and so forth.

Family, despite appearing a minor unit, is the main institution and the major element in any society. Coordination of school and home play an important role in achieving a student's educational goals. If these two important entities are in conflict with each other, neither the practical demands of parents nor the school programs reach their goals. A student who witnesses his parents arguing and fighting in the morning is affected emotionally and intellectually and hence cannot learn his lesson materials properly at school (Hashemi & Noroozi, 2004). Parents are the strongest predictor of behavioral and cognitive problems in their children (Tiet, Bird, Hoven, Wu, Moore & Davies, 2001). Parents who are experiencing conflict have difficulty understanding children's state and this misunderstanding leads to their reduced sensitivity towards child behavior (Cummings and Davies, 1996). Conflict may also arise when both parents are working. Varying degrees of autonomy and solidarity in the relationship between parents can cause differences between them, ranging from mild tension to complete conflict (Yong and Long, 1998 as quoted by the Mohagheghi, 2011).

Moreover, many problems such as behavioral, cognitive, psychological and physical problems can develop with parental conflict. As the rate of conflict increases, there is a need to know the effect of parental conflict on adolescent's academic achievement. It is hence very

important to study the effects of parental conflict on academic achievement of their adolescents. Although the research demonstrates that family conflict is associated with poor achievement in school, most of these studies have used cumulative measures of achievement, such as GPA in their studies (Mazaheri et al., 2011; Haj-Yahia, 2001; Hesami et al., 2010; Dottere et al., 2008; Ghazarian & Buehler, 2010; Unger, Brown & Tressell, 2000). A longitudinal study done by Sun & Li (2002) on 340 families, found that children in conflicted families do poorly on cognitive tests done at the ages of 15 and 24 month than those of children from normal families. Inter-parental conflict places youth at risk for difficulties in academic achievement (Unger et al., 2000). They state that the effects of the inter-parental conflict can be twofold: one, when it directly affects the adolescents and hence their academic achievements and second, where adolescents were not directly involved in the conflict but, were involved by the family members, which in turn impacted their academic achievement. High levels of inter-parental conflict and family discord may lead to lesser involvement of parents in adolescents' school- related activities.

4. Methodology

4.1 Participants

The sample of this study consists of 248 late adolescent participants (124 female, 124 male), ranging in age from 17 to 18 years, from 3rd and pre-university in high school in Bandar Abbas, Iran. Respondents were selected using cluster sampling to size sampling technique.

4.2 Procedure

Approval was obtained from four High Schools in Bandar Abbas, Iran. The administration offices of each school provided a list of students aged between 17 and 18. Data was later collected through a self-administrated questionnaire.

Participants were ensured that their identities will remain anonymous and answers confidential, additionally, they were given ample time to complete the questionnaires. The researcher and four assistants briefed the administration on the process of distributing the questionnaires to the respondents who took approximately thirty minutes to complete the questionnaire.

4.3 Measures

4.3.1 Inter-parental conflict

This part of the questionnaire measured inter-parental conflict, which is adapted from Adela (2013), University of Southern California. It consists of four dimensions namely: child report parent-parent conflict (10 items), child-mother conflict (5 items), child-father conflict (5 items), and child report of problems in school (7 items). In total, a 27 item scale that assesses inter-parental conflict reporting by children on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (agree), and 4 (strongly agree). Total score of the Inter-parental conflict ranged from 27 to 108. Respondents with higher scores meant a possibility of higher

inter-parental conflict among respondents. The internal consistency for inter-parental conflict in this study was .94.

4.3.2. Academic achievement

Cumulative grade point average (CGPA) collected from school records for adolescents measured academic achievement. The CGPA is based on the average of student's grades in Math, English, Social studies, and Science. The Department of Education of Iran, divides CGPA into four categories: (1) grad D or fail, mark from 0 to 9.99, (2) grad C or weak, score of 10 to 14.99, (3) grad B as a moderate mark a score of 15 to 16.99, and (4) a score of 17 to 20 is considered excellent (grade A). In this study, academic achievement refers to the student's last year's cumulative GPA (0-20). High score indicates high academic achievement.

5. Data analysis

In this study the data were analysed by Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. An Exploratory Data Analysis (EDA) was used to test the normality of data. One-sample t-test used to determine the level of inter-parental conflict problems as perceived by students of high schools in Bandar Abbas. Spearman correlation was conducted to determine the association between inter-parental conflict and adolescent academic achievement.

6. Findings

The results are presented in table 1 to determine that, the t value should be significant at 0.05 and the mean should be more 2.0 in order to conclude about level of inter-parental conflict. As shown in the table below, there were significant t-values for all dimensions including overall inter-parental conflict. The level of perceived conflict in terms of parent-parent conflict was high among the students ($M=2.08$, $SD=.790$, $t=-18.267$, $df=243$, $p=.000$), which means that the students in these schools are faced by these conflicts among their parents. Further, the level of perceived conflict by the students in terms of mother-child conflict was also quite high as the t value was highly significant at 0.05. The mean was high which indicates that they agreed that they face conflict with their mothers ($M=2.27$, $SD=.756$, $t=-15.017$, $df=243$, $p=.000$). So, the conflict between the mother and child was perceived high among the students in these schools. In terms of the conflict between father-child, the students reported that the level of this conflict is also among the students which may affect their level of concentration on the study. Students reported that they confront with their fathers as the t value for one-sample t-test was highly significant at 0.05. This means that the students agreed on assumption that they face conflict with their dads ($M=2.27$, $SD=.725$, $t=-15.878$, $df=247$, $p=.000$). Students' level of perceived conflict and problems in the schools was also tested using the same one-sample t-test as shown in the table below. The results suggested that the students perceived the existence of problems in the school related issues. The t value was highly significant at 0.05 which indicated that the students had high level of perceived conflict when it comes to school related issues. The mean for the variable was also high; meaning that students agreed that there are problems faced by the students ($M=2.42$, $SD=.706$, $t=-12.889$, $df=242$, $p=.000$). In addition, the researcher also assessed the overall inter-parent conflict as reported by the students in order to come out with a conclusion of its

level as perceived by the students. The overall inter-parent conflict is the product of combining all the four dimensions of inter-parent conflict. Thus, results as shown in the table below revealed that the overall level of reported inter-parent conflict by the students is also high among them. Students report the existence of conflict among their parents as well as with their parents and the management of school as the *t* value was highly significant at 0.05 which indicated an overall agreement with existence of inter-parental conflict as reported by the students ($M=2.23$, $SD=.636$, $t=-18.546$, $df=235$, $p=.000$).

Table 1 Level of perceived inter-parental conflict among school students in Bandar Abbas City

No.	Variable/items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
1.	Adolescent report of parent-parent conflict	2.08	.790	-18.267	243	.000
2.	Adolescent report of mother-adolescent conflict	2.27	.756	-15.017	243	.000
3.	Adolescent report of father-adolescent conflict	2.27	.725	-15.878	247	.000
4.	Adolescent report of problems in school	2.42	.706	-12.889	242	.000
5.	Overall concept for inter-parental conflict	2.23	.636	-18.546	235	.000

As shown in table 2 below, there was significant negative and strong relationship between academic achievement and all dimensions of inter-parental conflict dimension. The academic achievement is negatively correlated with adolescent report of parent-parent conflict ($r=-.707$, $p=.000$), adolescent report of mother-adolescent conflict ($r=-.641$, $p=.000$), adolescent report of father-adolescent conflict ($r=-.624$, $p=.000$) and adolescent report of problems in school ($r=.681$, $p=.000$). This results indicates that the higher the level of inter-parental conflict, the lower the CGPA of the student.

On the other hand, the results suggested significant correlation among the four dimensions of inter-parental conflict. Parent-parent conflict was significantly and positively correlated with mother-adolescent conflict ($r=.688$, $p=.000$), father-adolescent conflict ($r=.607$, $p=.000$), and problems in school ($r=.566$, $p=.000$). In addition, mother-adolescent conflict is positively correlated with father-adolescent conflict ($r=.610$, $p=.000$) and problems in school ($r=.629$, $p=.000$). Finally, father-adolescent conflict was positively correlated with problems in school ($r=.634$, $p=.000$). It means that all the dimensions were positively correlated which means the higher one of them, the higher the others. However, the highest correlation observed was between parent-parent conflict and mother-adolescent conflict ($r=.688$, $p=.000$).

Table 2 Spearman rank Correlation between inter-parent conflict dimensions

No.	Variables	1	2	3	4
1.	Adolescent report of parent-parent conflict	-	-	-	-

2.	Adolescent report of mother-adolescent conflict	.688**	-	-	-
3.	Adolescent report of father-adolescent conflict	.607**	.610**	-	-
4.	Adolescent report of problems in school	.566**	.629**	.634**	-
5.	Academic achievement	-.707**	-.641**	-.624	-.681**

Note: ** p <.000

Results indicated that (1) students of high schools in Bandar Abbas were faced by high level of inter-parental conflict, (2) a significant negative and strong relationship between academic achievement and all dimensions of inter-parental conflict dimension.

7. Discussions and Conclusions

The aim of this study was to determine the inter-parental conflict and academic achievement among adolescent of high schools in Bandar Abbas, Iran. The findings of this study showed that students in high schools in Bandar Abbas city reported that the levels of parent-parent conflict, mother-child conflict, father-child conflict, as well as reported problems in the school were high as perceived by the students. The highest reported level of conflict was towards problems in the schools followed by mother-child and father-child conflicts. Parent-parent conflict was in the lowest level as its mean is lower than the rest of the variables. The results of this study is consistent with previous research indicating that family conflict does significantly impact students' problem in high school (Sturge-Apple, Davies & Cummings, 2006; Amato & Cheadle, 2008). Moreover, findings of this study demonstrated statistically significant negative relationships between Inter-parental conflict and academic achievement. Adolescents who experienced more conflict between parents tend to exhibit lower education outcome (Ghazarian & Buehler, 2010; Haj-Yahia, 2001). The finding by Sun and Li (2001) showed that students who have conflicts in their family they have a lower CGPA. Thus, it is known that a family environment and a good communication between parent and their children can help their children to be more succeed in school. The current research used surveys to collect data. In future, other methods like interviews and observation can be used to understand the relationship between various parties efficiently.

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