

Perceived Inter-Parental Conflict, Interpersonal Functioning and Self-Esteem in Young Adults

Ushna Khan

BS Clinical Psychology, Department of Clinical Psychology, Shifa Tameer e Millat University,
Islamabad, Pakistan

Asma Shoukat

BS Clinical Psychology, Department of Clinical Psychology, Shifa Tameer e Millat University,
Islamabad, Pakistan

Seher Iqbal

BS Clinical Psychology, Department of Clinical Psychology, Shifa Tameer e Millat University,
Islamabad, Pakistan

Dr. Neelam Ehsan

Associate Professor, Department of Clinical Psychology, Shifa Tameer e Millat University,

Abstract: The study was carried in an attempt to find out the relationship of perceived interparental conflict, interpersonal functioning and self-esteem among young adults. Moreover, the predictive role of perceived interparental conflict on the interpersonal functioning and self-esteem among the young adults was also explored. Using cross sectional research design, a sample of 200 young adults (18-25 years old) was taken using convenience sampling from different academic institutions of Islamabad. The study variables were measured using Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale, Functional Idiographic Assessment Template-Questionnaire Short Form and Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale. Results revealed significant negative relation of perceived interparental conflicts with interpersonal functioning and self-esteem. Interpersonal functioning and self-esteem showed significant positive correlation. Moreover perceived interparental conflict negatively predicted interpersonal functioning and self-esteem among our sample. Additionally significant gender differences were observed in interpersonal functioning and self-esteem. However, non-significant differences were observed on the basis of age and socioeconomic status among perceived interparental conflict, interpersonal functioning and self-esteem of the young adults.

Keywords: Perceived Interparental Conflicts, Interpersonal Functioning, Self-Esteem

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INTRODUCTION

Conflicts between parents, whether they are in a romantic relationship or co-parenting separately is “interparental conflict”. Children witnessing the conflict even when they are not involved in it is correlated to poor mental health, increased stress, and poor functioning (Martin, 2018). Any kind of verbal or physical aggression between parents concerning domestic issues is referred as interparental conflict. It is a significant negative circumstance which can rise in any interparental relationships (Grych & Fincham, 1990). Interparental conflict is described as any interparental interaction either significant or non-significant which comprises of a negative or positive difference of opinion (Cummings & Davies, 2010). Researchers have put great emphasis on importance of perceptions of children and reaction to interparental conflict because that is how children perceive whether they are distressed by the conflict or their functioning is hindered or not.

Adulthood starts from the age of 18 and lasts till the age of 25. It is an age of conflict and worry amid intimacy and isolation (Berzoff, 2008). If they want to have intimacy during this period, they must have “mutuality, which requires the ability to lose oneself and find oneself in another without losing one’s identity” (Berzoff, 2008). Weak identity leads to isolation and fear of commitment as “when identity is shaky, attempts at intimacy become desperate attempts at delineating the fuzzy outlines of identity by mutual narcissistic mirroring: to fall in love often means to fall into one’s mirror image” (Berzoff, 2008). Berzoff also stated in one of his research papers that “for people whose identities are fragmented, rigid, or

brittle, the capacity for real intimacy may be limited or impossible”.

Erickson describes this stage as “the strength of the ego” as individual shares his identity with someone while maintaining his own self. Previous researches show that child's problem-solving capabilities, social and interpersonal skills and compressive social competency is affected by interparental conflict (Feldman & Masalha, 2010). Higher levels of parent-child conflict, more intimate partner violence (Narayan et al., 2013) and more relationship issues in the future (Wolfinger, 2000) is seen due to interparental conflict (Benson et al, 2008).

Adulthood is a period where individuals begin to develop ways to relate to their dating partners and they learn ways to manage their conflicts. The primary romantic relationship that children are immediately and closely connected to is parents' marriage; therefore, close relationships shall prevent violence (Murphy & O'Leary, 1989). Behaviors learned from their interactions should be informative to adolescents in order to have more reciprocal and intimate relationships (Simon et al., 2000). Psychosocial and identity development is a salient part of adulthood (Sebastian et al., 2008). Therefore, affection and rejection in this phase has an impact on interpersonal functioning (Boisvert & Poulin, 2016). Moreover, interpersonal functioning consists of intimacy, social skills, social cognition and connectedness (Wetterneck & Hart, 2012).

Another important aspect in development of personality is self-esteem. An evaluation of a person's beliefs and attitudes toward their values and abilities is known as self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965). Self-esteem is also referred to as individual's global evaluations, attitudes, and beliefs regarding their self and self-worth (Marsh, 1990). An evaluation of one's importance and value in positive manner is known as self-esteem; that is, an individual's evaluation of “being a person” (Judge & Bono, 2001).

When a child feels valued, loved and supported, it would lead to higher self-esteem (Pollastri, 2010). Increased sense of self-worth (Hopkins & Klein, 1993), positive self-concept (Parish & McCluskey, 1992) and high levels of self-esteem (Buri, 1989) has been associated with parental nurturance. Effects of marital relationships on children adjustment and other variables related to mental health were commonly examined previously. Studying the effect of perceived interparental conflict on interpersonal functioning and self-esteem will make a significant contribution to existing studies. Another important aspect is inclusion of young adults who are comparatively less often included in studies of interparental conflict and its relation and effect on other psychological factors.

Literature Review

Social, Historical and interpersonal areas which effect human development are given special importance according to Life-course theory (Elder, 1998) which suggests how impactful family member's role can be in terms of shaping individuals' life chances. It is widely been observed that young adults are going through a transitional period where multiple roles are being overlapped between late adolescence and early adulthood. Their reliance on parental support during decision-making processes and times of financial instability is common at this age (Fingerman et al., 2009). Parental dependence also increases among young adults as compared to past. (Furstenberg, 2010; Settersten & Ray, 2010). It has been widely observed that young adult's attainment and emotional well-being shows positive association with parental involvement and advice (Fingerman et al., 2012).

Early adulthood (ages ranging from 18 to 25) is period of drastic changes with noticeable variations in the sequencing and timing of life transitions such as completing school, beginning a career, entering romantic partnership, getting married, and becoming parents (Arnett, 2000; Cohen et al., 2003). According to psychoanalytic perspective exposure to inter-parental conflict in childhood can lead to psychological and behavioral issues in adolescents (Davies & Lindsey, 2004). Interparental conflict's negative effects on children's mental health are found to persist until early adulthood period (Amato & Sobolewski, 2001).

Zill, Morrison, and Coiro (1993) found that there was association with psychological and relationship problems during early adulthood and exposure to chronic interparental conflict during childhood. Researches show linkage of interparental conflict in emerging adulthood with more depression, increased loneliness, and lower romantic relationship capabilities (Kumar & Mattanah, 2018).

Children are more at risk of demonstrating low levels of social competence and poor interpersonal skills while living in home with marital conflict (Cummings et al., 2000). Child adjustment and marital conflict are interrelated as it has significant effect on how children respond in the future. Emotional insecurity is more prevalent among children with disturbed home environment (Davies et al., 1994).

Research suggests that youths' social development could possibly be hindered due to increased exposure to interparental conflicts. There has been a recent finding of interconnection between interparental conflict and complications in interpersonal relationships with romantic partners, siblings and peers (Davilla, & Fincham, 2006). Adolescents who experience interparental conflict at increased levels tends to look forward to conflict in their relationships and behave in certain manner that tends to increase

likelihood of conflict with their romantic partners. Having been exposed to interparental conflict, youth become sensitized more to interparental conflict and tend to become more attentive to cues leading to conflict (Davies et al., 1999; Fosco et al., 2007; Grych & Fincham, 1990).

In a sample of 391 adolescents between the ages from 14 to 18 years, when exposed to greater parental conflicts, boys agreed with use of aggression in their own romantic relationship. They found it hard to control their anger, and believed that their peer group's romantic relationship also consisted of more aggressive behavior. Witnessing higher levels of interparental conflict was linked with increased degree of verbal or physical aggression towards their own romantic mates. Aggression was not associated with interparental conflict among girls (Kinsfogel & Grych, 2005).

A child's socioemotional development is impacted by the way their parents control their anger and manage conflicts. Recent researches support this hypothesis, as significant associations between quality of attachments of parents (Frosch et al., 2000), children's schemas regarding their familial relationships (Shamir et al., 2001; Grych et al., 2002) relationships with peers (Parke et al., 2001), and interparental conflict were found.

The links of interparental conflict was measured once during early to middle adolescence and then in their young adulthood, six years later of 243 families, with psychopathology and antisocial behavior. A significant predictive relation was found of interparental conflict on antisocial behavior among males. Young adult functioning and their relation with their parents were found to be directly impacted by interparental conflict. Higher levels of psychopathology were predicted by estranged relation with father and mother in both genders. Another study reported higher antisocial behavior problems among girls when encountered with problematic paternal relationship (Neighbors et al., 1977).

Studies of adult romantic relationships show that dealing with interparental conflict can influence the development of conflict resolution skills in romantic relationships. Interparental conflicts are important indicator of marital problems and conflicts in offspring relationships (Amato & Booth, 2001; Conger et al., 2000). In a recent study, Sağkal & Özdemir (2019) revealed that perceived interparental conflict has associations with couple satisfaction of emerging adults' through romantic relationship conflict and marital attitudes.

Children's interpersonal skills, problem-solving abilities, social skills and social competence are affected by interparental conflict (Feldman & Masalha, 2010). Hostility among sibling's relationship (Stocker & Youngblade, 1999), conflict with peer group (Finger et al., 2010), problems in adolescent romantic relationships (Cui & Fincham, 2010), increased ratio of breakdown of future relationships (Wolfinger, 2000) and intimate partner violence (Narayan et al., 2013), is also positively linked with increased interparental conflict.

The anticipation and potentiation of conflict with romantic partners may be observed in adolescents who encounter increased levels of interparental conflict. Due to experiencing interparental conflict, youth displays excessive vigilance to conflict cues (Davies et al., 1999; Fosco et al., 2007; Grych & Fincham, 1990). Verbal and physical aggression from parents can lead adults to use similar conflict styles with their romantic partners (Ehrensaft et al., 2003; Martin, 1990; Reese-Weber & BartleHaring, 1998).

El-Sheikh and Harger (2001) demonstrated in their study that generalization was possible, as participants made similar appraisals regarding conflicts between unfamiliar adults as well as for their own parents. The results obtained from a research aimed at assessing the patterns of communication among young adults regarding parental separation and previous family disputes suggested that people whose parents have gone through a separation are more prone towards having poor intimate communications. Women were specifically found more inclined towards poor non intimate communication when they witnessed conflicts among their parents (Herzog & Cooney, 2002).

Significant associations were found between increased interparental conflict, more adolescents' problem behavior and less self-esteem. In a study of marital conflict, parenting and attachment, parental warmth was associated with increased self-esteem levels and reduced problematic behaviors styles (Emery & Leary, 1992).

Rationale

Researchers have recognized that during transition phase from adolescence to adulthood, strong family ties are very much important for development of identity and life satisfaction (Crocetti & Meeus, 2015). Links between exposure towards interparental conflict and mental health problems is of great importance for emerging young adults as this age group is relatively closer to marriage and other close relationship formation phase. So, chances for them to transfer their previous negative schema about marriages and family relationships to their own marriages or relationships increases (Allen & Mitchell, 2015). Also most of works reviewed in literature were from the west or other regions; however there exists cultural differences between parental styles and relationship. Therefore, generalizing concept and phenomenon from one culture to another is always matter of concern.

Thus, enhanced understanding of the relationship between perceived interparental conflicts,

interpersonal functioning and self-esteem in emerging adults in Pakistan will offer significant insight into a possible problematic family and relationship processes. Thus, the purpose of the present study will be to examine effects of perceived interparental conflict on interpersonal functioning and self-esteem and any gender differences observed in this relation during study.

Objectives

The objectives of present study are as follows:

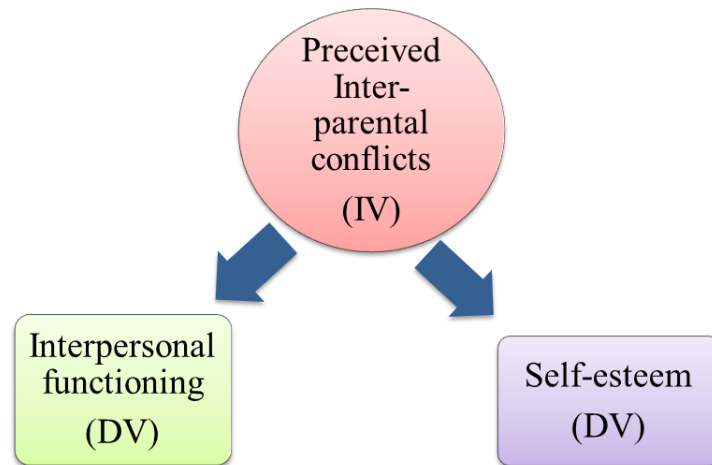
- To find out a relationship of perceived inter-parental conflicts with interpersonal functioning and self-esteem among young adults.
- To examine the role of perceived inter-parental conflicts in interpersonal functioning and self-esteem among young adults.
- To find the differences on the basis of gender in perceived inter-parental conflicts, interpersonal functioning and self-esteem.
- To find the differences on basis of other demographics in perceived inter-parental conflicts, interpersonal functioning and self-esteem.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses of present study are as follows:

1. There is a negative relationship between inter-parental conflicts and interpersonal functioning among young adults.
2. There is a negative relationship between inter-parental conflict and self-esteem among young adults.
3. Inter-parental conflict is a predictor of poor interpersonal relationships and low self-esteem among young adults.
4. Perceived inter-parental conflicts levels will be high in females as compared to male young adults.
5. There will be differences on basis of other demographics (gender, age and socio-economic status) in perceived inter-parental conflicts, interpersonal functioning and self-esteem.

Figure 1
Conceptual Framework



Note: This figure shows the conceptual framework of our study

Chapter 2

METHOD

Research Design

Cross-sectional design was adopted for this study.

Participants

200 participants with ages ranging from 18 to 25 were selected by convenience sampling from different institutes.

Inclusion criteria

Participants who were not currently enrolled in university, age ranged in the young adulthood criteria and were capable mentally to take part in the study.

Ethical Consideration

Research was conducted under supervision of esteemed supervisor after approval of ethical board of university. Voluntary participation was maintained i.e. participants were free to opt in or out of the study at any point in time. Informed consent was signed after participants were informed purpose of the study. Confidentiality regarding information obtained from participants was maintained and was only used for research purposes. Any kind of physical, social or psychological harm was kept to an absolute minimum.

Procedure

Permission was taken from respective universities authorities to collect data. Then participants were approached and briefed about the study purpose, procedure, and confidentiality maintenance. They were asked to sign an informed consent form once their voluntary participation was ensured. Participants were then given questionnaire forms including demographics form, Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale, Interpersonal Relationship Questionnaire -Short form (FIAT-Q-SF) and Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale. After data collection, scoring and analysis of survey answers was done and statistical analysis was run on IBM SPSS Software. Descriptive statistics, correlation, regression analysis, t-test and ANOVA were used to compute the results.

Chapter 3

RESULTS

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Demographic Variables (N=200)

| Demographic Variables | <i>n</i> | % |
|------------------------------|-----------------|----------|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 95 | 47.5 |
| Female | 105 | 52.5 |
| Age | | |
| 18-21 | 140 | 70 |
| 21-25 | 60 | 30 |
| Education | | |
| Undergraduate | 196 | 98 |
| Postgraduate | 4 | 2 |
| Socio-economic Status | | |
| Low | 53 | 26.5 |
| Middle | 60 | 30 |
| Upper Middle | 47 | 23.5 |
| High | 40 | 20 |
| Province | | |
| Punjab | 107 | 53.5 |
| Federal | 81 | 40.5 |
| AJK | 5 | 2.5 |
| KPK | 3 | 1.5 |
| Demographic Variables | <i>n</i> | % |
| Sindh | 2 | 1 |
| Balochistan | 2 | 1 |
| Marital Status | | |
| Single | 178 | 89 |
| Engaged | 12 | 6 |
| Married | 10 | 5 |
| Parent's Marital Status | | |
| Married | 188 | 94 |
| Divorced | 12 | 6 |

| | | |
|--------------------------|-----|------|
| Living with step-parents | | |
| Yes | 9 | 4.5 |
| No | 191 | 95.5 |
| No. of Siblings | | |
| 0-6 | 188 | 94 |
| 7-13 | 12 | 6 |

Note. AJK = Azad Jammu Kashmir; KPK= Khyber Pakhtun Khawa; n = Frequency; % = percentage

Table 1 shows that a greater number of females (n = 105, 52.5%) participated in the study compared to males (n = 95, 47.5%). The majority of the participants belong to the age group 18-25 years (n = 140, 70%) whereas some participants (n = 60, 30%) belong to the age group of 21-25 years. A greater number of participants are undergraduate students (n = 196, 98%) and a small number of participants are postgraduate students (n = 4, 2%). Most of the participants fall under the category of low socio-economic status (n = 60, 30%), and some fall under middle socio-economic status (n = 53, 26.5%). The majority of the participants were single (n = 178, 89%) and fewer are engaged (n = 12, 6%) and married (n = 10, 5%). A large number of participants' parents were married (n = 188, 94%) and only a few were divorced (n = 12, 6%). Most of the participants have a number of siblings between 0-6 (n = 188, 94%) and few have a number of siblings between 7-13 (n = 12, 6%).

Table 2
Alpha Reliabilities and Psychometric Properties of Study Variables (N = 200)

| Scales | k | Cronbach's <i>a</i> | M | SD | Skewnes s | Kurtosis | Range | |
|-------------------------------------|----|------------------------|--------|-------|--------------|----------|-----------|--------|
| | | | | | | | Potential | Actual |
| CPIC | 48 | .867 | 39.48 | 13.95 | -.381 | -.776 | 0-63 | 0-84 |
| Conflict Properties | 19 | .735 | 14.90 | 6.12 | -0.84 | -.723 | | |
| Threat | 19 | .735 | 10.56 | 3.98 | -.002 | -.567 | | |
| Self-Blame | 9 | .749 | 6.46 | 4.03 | .038 | -1.173 | | |
| FIAT-Q-SF | 32 | .786 | 104.63 | 16.26 | .253 | .150 | 64-148 | 0-192 |
| Avoidance of Interpersonal Intimacy | 8 | .767 | 21.38 | 7.14 | .324 | .297 | | |
| Argumentativeness or Disagreement | 7 | .791 | 20.37 | 6.61 | .324 | -.002 | | |
| Connection and Reciprocity | 4 | .705 | 18.87 | 3.87 | -.910 | .726 | | |
| Conflict Aversion | 3 | .609 | 8.23 | 3.12 | .406 | -.009 | | |
| Emotional Experience and Expression | 5 | .183 | 19.66 | 2.93 | -.077 | -.236 | | |
| Excessive Expressivity | 5 | .093 | 16.12 | 5.24 | .009 | -.343 | | |
| RSE | 10 | .638 | 27.20 | 4.4 | .225 | .587 | 13-39 | 0-40 |

Note. CPIC= Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale; FIAT-Q-SF = Functional Idiographic Assessment Template-Questionnaire Short Form (FIAT-Q-SF); RSE= Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale.

Table 3
Correlation among Study Variables (N=200)

| Scales | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-----|--------|---|----|----|----|
| 1. CPIC | - | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Conflict Properties | .87** | - | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Threat | .81** | .62** | - | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Self-Blame | .74** | .42** | .50** | - | | | | | | | | |
| 5. FIAT-Q-SF | -.53** | -.39** | -.48** | -.46** | - | | | | | | | |
| 6. Avoidance of Interpersonal intimacy | -.19** | -.20** | -.19** | -.06 | .69** | - | | | | | | |
| 7. Argumentativeness or Disagreement | -.51** | -.36** | -.44** | -.48** | .79** | .34** | - | | | | | |
| 8. Connection and Reciprocity | -.24** | -.14 | -.15* | -.33** | .22** | -.04 | .12 | - | | | | |
| 9. Conflict Aversion | -.06 | -.04 | -.08 | -.05 | .32** | .27** | .11 | -.33** | - | | | |

PERCEIVED INTER-PARENTAL CONFLICT, INTERPERSONAL FUNCTIONING AND SELF-ESTEEM IN YOUNG ADULTS

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-----|------|-------|-------|---|
| 10. Emotional Experience and Expression | -.17* | -.14* | -.21** | -.10 | .27** | .06 | .08 | .05 | -.05 | - | | |
| 11. Excessive Expressivity | -.42** | -.30** | -.42** | -.39** | .68** | .17* | .52** | .02 | .18* | .10 | - | |
| 12. RSE | -.37** | -.34** | -.36** | -.23** | .33** | .21** | .28** | .10 | -.01 | .29** | .21** | - |

Note. *p < .05; **p < .01; CPIC= Children’s Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale; FIAT-Q- SF = Functional Idiographic Assessment Template- Questionnaire Short Form (FIAT-Q-SF); RSE= Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale.

Table 2 indicates the descriptive statistics, including Cronbach’s alpha coefficient, mean, standard deviation, kurtosis, skewness and score range details. It has been found that the Children’s Perceptions of Interparental Conflicts, Functional Idiographic Assessment Template-Questionnaire Short Form and Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale have shown an acceptable range of reliability for the current study. Values of mean and standard deviation also provide evidence of the normal distribution of data. The values skewness and kurtosis indicate that the data is within the acceptable range.

Table no 3 shows the correlation among study variables. One finding reveals that perceived interparental conflict had a significant negative correlation with interpersonal functioning (r = -.53, p<.01) and self-esteem (r = -.37, p< .01). Moreover, Interpersonal functioning reveals a significant positive relationship with self-esteem (r = .33, p< .01). The subscales of Children Perception of Interparental Conflicts i.e. conflict properties and threat also showed significant negative correlation with Avoidance of Interpersonal Intimacy (, Argumentativeness or Disagreement, Emotional Experience and Expression and Excessive Expressivity (subscales of interpersonal functioning) and self-esteem. Self-blame (subscale of Children Perception of Interparental Conflicts scale) was also found to be negative and significantly correlated with Argumentativeness or Disagreement, Connection and Reciprocity and Excessive Expressivity and self-esteem.

Table 4

Simple Linear Regression Analysis to Assess Perceived Interparental Conflict predicts Interpersonal Functioning (N = 200)

| Variables | B | SE | t | p | 95%CI |
|----------------|-------|------|-------|------|----------------|
| Constant | 128.7 | 2.94 | 43.75 | .000 | [122.9, 134.5] |
| CPIC | -.61 | .07 | -8.55 | .000 | [-.75, -.47] |
| R ² | .27 | | | | |
| F | 73.17 | | | | |

Note. P < .05; B = Unstandardized Coefficients, SE = Standard Error; CL = Confidence Level; CPIC = Children Perception of Interparental Conflicts.

Table 4 show a simple linear regression analysis to assess the predicted role of interparental conflict on interpersonal functioning. The R2 value of .27 revealed that the predictor explained 27% variance in the outcome variable F(1, 198) = 73.17, p < .05. Our findings show that perceived interparental conflict negatively predicts interpersonal functioning among the sample (β = -.52, p< .05). For each unit increase in interparental conflicts there is interpersonal functioning decrease by 0.27 units.

Table 5

Simple Linear Regression Analysis to Assess Perceived Interparental Conflict predicts Self-esteem (N = 200)

| Variables | B | SE | t | p | 95%CI |
|----------------|------|------|--------|------|----------------|
| Constant | 31.9 | .867 | 36.775 | .000 | [30.2, 33.64] |
| CPIC | -.12 | .02 | -5.73 | .000 | [-.16, -.07] |
| R ² | .14 | | | | |
| F | 32.9 | | | | |

Note. P < .005; B = Unstandardized Coefficients, SE = Standard Error; CL = Confidence Level; CPIC = Children Perception of Interparental Conflicts.

Table 5 shows a simple linear regression analysis to assess the predicted role of perceived interparental conflict on self-esteem. The R2 value of .14 revealed that the predictor explained 14% variance in the outcome variable F (1, 198) = 32.90, p < .005. Our findings show that perceived interparental conflict negatively predicts self-esteem among the sample (β = -.37, p< .05). For each unit increase in interparental conflicts there is a self-esteem decrease by 0.14 units.

Table 6

Mean difference, Standard deviation and t values between male and female young adults on Perceived Interparental Conflicts, Interpersonal Functioning and Self-esteem (N= 200)

| Variables | Male (n = 95) | | Female (n = 105) | | t (198) | p | Cohen's d |
|-----------|------------------|-------|---------------------|-------|---------|------|--------------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | | | |
| | CPIC | 40.93 | 13.73 | 38.17 | | | |
| FIAT-Q-SF | 100.97 | 16.37 | 107.96 | 15.42 | -3.10 | .002 | -0.44 |
| RSE | 26.77 | 4.08 | 27.58 | 4.64 | -1.30 | .19 | -0.185 |

Note. CPIC= Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale; FIAT-Q-SF = Functional Idiographic Assessment Template-Questionnaire Short Form (FIAT-Q-SF); RSE= Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale.

Table 6 showed the significant gender difference in interpersonal functioning. Mean value indicates that female (M=107.9, SD= 15.42) has a higher score on interpersonal functioning as compared to male (M=100.9, SD= 16.37). Additionally, there is no significant gender difference in perceived interparental conflicts and self-esteem.

Table 1

Mean difference, Standard deviation and t values between age groups of young adults on Perceived Interparental Conflicts, Interpersonal Functioning and Self-esteem (N= 200)

| Variables | Age | | | | t(198) | p | Cohen's d |
|-----------|-------|------|--------|------|--------|-----|-----------|
| | 18-21 | | 21-25 | | | | |
| | M | SD | M | SD | | | |
| CPIC | 39.78 | 14.2 | 38.97 | 13.0 | .378 | .70 | 0.05 |
| FIAT-Q-SF | 104.7 | 17.0 | 104.47 | 14.5 | .093 | .92 | 0.014 |
| RSE | 27.48 | 4.2 | 26.5 | 4.7 | 1.3 | .16 | 0.2 |

Note. CPIC= Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale; FIAT-Q-SF = Functional Idiographic Assessment Template-Questionnaire Short Form (FIAT-Q-SF); RSE= Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale.

Table 7 shows non-significant age difference among children's perception of interparental conflict, interpersonal functioning and self-esteem among respondents.

Table 2

Mean, Standard Deviation and One-Way Analysis of Variance in Perceived Interparental Conflict, Interpersonal Functioning and Self-esteem Across Socio-economic Status (N=200)

| Variables | Low (n = 53) | | Middle (n = 60) | | Upper Middle (n = 47) | | High (n = 40) | | p | η ² |
|-----------|-----------------|-------|--------------------|-------|--------------------------|-------|------------------|-------|-----|----------------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | | |
| | CPIC | 40.34 | 13.13 | 38.50 | 15.83 | 39.51 | 13.14 | 39.54 | | |
| FIAT-Q-SF | 101.7 | 13.75 | 107.5 | 18.01 | 106.2 | 16.3 | 102.2 | 16.05 | 1.6 | 0.024 |
| RSE | 25.98 | 4.6 | 27.32 | 4.2 | 28.36 | 4.4 | 27.25 | 3.9 | 2.5 | 0.011 |

Note. **p< .05

Table 8 shows the results of One-way ANOVA within groups for comparing respondent's scores along their socio-economic status, which includes high (n = 40), upper middle (n = 47), middle (n = 60) and low (n = 53). Non-significant difference was observed in children's perception of interparental conflict, interpersonal functioning and self-esteem according to socio-economic status.

Chapter 4

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed at investigating links between perceived interparental conflict, interpersonal functioning and self-esteem in young adults. Various past researchers have demonstrated the associations between interparental conflict and adjustment problems of children and adolescents (Cummings & Davies, 2002; Zimet & Jacob, 2001). However there is an important literature gap regarding prevalence of these findings in subsequent developmental stages of life span, therefore this research addressed the relationship of perceived interparental conflict, interpersonal functioning and self-esteem in young adults. We further analyzed the predictive role of perceived interparental conflict on

interpersonal functioning and self-esteem in young adults.

The findings of the current study supported the first hypothesis i.e., a significant negative relationship between inter-parental conflicts and interpersonal functioning was found among young adults in present study. This refers that interpersonal functioning levels may decrease if there is greater levels of perceived interparental conflict and vice versa. This finding is supported in literature which stated that there is higher risk of low levels of social competence and poor interpersonal skills demonstrated by children living with marital conflict (Cummings et al., 2000).

The results of this research provided supporting evidence regarding second hypothesis of study which was existence of negative relationship between inter-parental conflict and self-esteem in young adults. Correlation analysis showed a significant negative relationship between perceived inter-parental conflict and self-esteem. Additionally, a significant negative correlation was also found between Self-esteem and subcomponents of Perceived Inter-parental conflict, i.e., conflict properties, threat and self-blame. Based on the results, we could infer that the higher the conflict among the parents' as perceived by the young adults, the lower their Self-esteem would be. The result was in line with the previous researches which suggest that there is significant inverse relationship between Inter-parental Conflict in general and as perceived by the children with Self-esteem of the children (Pawlak & Klein, 1996; Shen, 2009; Clements et al., 2014). This result is also consistent with another study that showed that Perceived inter-parental conflict was significantly and negatively correlated to self-esteem (Nazir et. Al. 2012).

Moreover it was further hypothesized that inter-parental conflict is a predictor of poor interpersonal relationships and low self-esteem among young adults. In our study, Perceived interparental conflicts were found to be significantly and negatively predict interpersonal functioning and self-esteem. Children actively construe internal working models by evaluating relationships in family in the context of marital conflicts. These models act as guidance in their future relationships in terms of behavior and interpretations of other's behavior. Literature also substantiates these findings. Similar evidence is reported by past researches that are in consistent with our results; that interpersonal functioning is poorly predicted by parental conflict throughout the life (Cummings & Davies, 1994; Arshad & Naz, 2014; Cummings et al, 2002; Mann & Gilliom, 2004; Davies & Martin, 2014).

Hypothesis was made in this current study that perceived inter-parental conflicts levels will be high in females as compared to male young adults. However our findings showed no significant gender differences in levels of perceived interparental conflict. This finding contradicts those of Cumming and Heindel (1999) and Morbech (2017) that showed females are more likely to display susceptibility to inter-parental conflict specifically in terms of internalizing behavior domains e.g., emotional distress, threat, fear, and responsibility.

Furthermore, our findings are inconsistent with the results of study conducted among primary school children by Vairami and Vorria (2007), which found a significant gender difference with regards to perceived threat among boys and self-blame among girls. In light of disparity with other studies, there is a need for more research on these differences or we could go beyond gender differences by identifying similarities exhibited by both genders. Only one subscale of perceived interparental conflict i.e. self-blame was reported to be higher in males in our present study. This result agrees with study were where more self-blame was reported in males (Richmond & Stocker, 2007).

Many previous researches have observed gender as a vital variable that links inter-parental conflict and children's adjustment. However in most of the studies, result patterns are generally complex and show inconsistency. Some of the researchers have demonstrated the linkage between inter-parental conflict and child maladjustment that was found more evident in boys as compared to girls especially in the terms of childhood externalizing factors thus supporting a male vulnerability hypothesis (Jouriles & Norwood, 1995; Davies & Lindsay, 2001; Kerig, 2001). Therefore, we can hypothesize that differences could exist in how boys and girls are impacted differently by inter-parental conflicts. This could be explained by one of explanations that girls are more likely to be sheltered and protected from conflict as compared to boys. However, it appears that both genders are equally aware of existence of marital conflict and are also have equal chances of being exposed to it (Emery & O'Leary, 1982; Porter & O'Leary, 1980).

Consistent with our current study's finding, previous investigations have reported significant relationship between marital conflict and girls' adjustment along with boys, suggesting that both boys and girls are likely to be affected by being exposure to inter-parental conflict in adverse manner (Emery & O'Leary, 1984; Johnson & O'Leary, 1987; O'Leary, 1988; Long et al., 1987; Peterson & Zill, 1986). The non-existent gender difference in regards to perceived interparental conflict in our study could be attributed to the sample characteristics. Cognitive-contextual theory (Grych & Fincham 1990) suggests that how children appraise a certain conflict helps mediate how conflicts impact them and also help guiding coping mechanisms of children. How children try to understand the conflict and its implications for themselves is known as appraisal. It could be hypothesized that no gender difference was observed as both genders equally perceived the conflicts between their parents. Researchers have put great emphasis on the significance of children's perception of interparental conflict and how they reach towards it. The

meanings interpreted by children out of inter-parental conflict predicts whether they are upset by the conflict and whether it is causing trouble in their adjustments and this could be the reason behind non-significant findings in current study.

Interpersonal functioning showed significant gender difference in our study where females scored high as compared to males. Females also scored significantly high on avoidance of interpersonal intimacy, subscale of interpersonal functioning. Past studies indicated that women, as compared to, are sensitive at greater level to the interpersonal meanings that are being exchanged with their partners. Furthermore females regulate their intimacy level or how close they allow others to come in light of expectations set by society (Tannen, 1990; Wood, 2009).

However, interpersonal functioning did not show any significant difference in terms of age and socioeconomic status. This could be due to non-comparable groups in terms of distribution of participants in different age and socioeconomic groups.

No significant gender, age and socioeconomic differences were observed in terms of self-esteem. We found few studies covering the whole life span regarding all of our study variables, however a number of researches have observed certain life stages in regards of self-esteem development, especially during the late adolescence and early adulthood periods (Lehnart, Neyer, & Eccles, 2010; Wagner, Lüdtke, Jonkmann, & Trautwein, 2013; Chung et al., 2014; Erol & Orth, 2011; Hutteman, Nestler, Wagner, Egloff, & Back, 2015). Evidence has been found in these studies regarding gradual increase in levels of self-esteem while a person goes from adolescence to adulthood in both genders. Different social influences control differences in self-esteem with respect to which show variations across different cultures and contexts according to sociocultural perspectives (Kling et al., 1999; Orth & Robins, 2014). In childhood, self-esteem is relatively high for both genders, it gradually decreases when child reaches adolescence age, then progressively rises through adulthood period and in old age, it again tends to decrease (Orth & Robins, 2014; Robins & Trzesniewski, 2005; Wagner et al., 2013).

CONCLUSION

The present study was conducted to find out relationship of perceived inter-parental conflicts with interpersonal functioning and self-esteem among young adults. Through findings we concluded that interpersonal functioning and self-esteem of young adults in Pakistan is impacted by how they perceived interparental conflicts. Our study's findings suggest that more the interparental conflict is perceived, the lesser levels of interpersonal functioning and self-esteem was reported. Moreover, interpersonal functioning revealed a significant positive relationship with self-esteem in our sample. The study also suggests the negative predictive role of perceived interparental conflicts on interpersonal functioning and self-esteem. Moreover, significant gender differences were observed in interpersonal functioning where female respondents scored significantly high on interpersonal functioning.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The current findings of our study can be viewed in light of following limitations and recommendations are suggested as follows;

1. Self-reported measures were included which could have led to interview or subjective biasness.
2. There could be unmeasured confounding variables e.g different cultural or social influences that could explain the relationship between perceived interparental conflict, interpersonal functioning and self-esteem in young adulthood that cannot be ruled out in this study.
3. Additionally, we aren't fully confident about when the exposure to interparental conflict can have the highest effect on individuals' adulthood and their interpersonal functioning as we didn't particularly ask the participants at what stage did they experience the interparental conflict.
4. The groups of married and divorced parents were incomparable in number therefore appropriate analysis in our study variables with respect to this demographic was not carried out. Comparable groups of married and divorced parents could be used for future studies to identify differences in two groups among study variables.
5. Increased sample size is recommended for future researches to enhance the generalization of findings.
6. The study could also be replicated with more diverse socio-demographically heterogeneous sample.

IMPLICATIONS

Following are the implications of current study,

1. This study would contribute to existing literature and its findings could be used for future research

purposes.

2. Parental understanding of how their clashes affect their children functioning should be improved. Since present study findings warrants that perceived interparental conflicts are significant predictors of interpersonal functioning and self-esteem among young adults, those parents who does not have good relationship with their spouses should pay special attention to their children's functioning.
3. Appropriate intervention programs should be targeted focusing on conflict resolution, dealing with interparental conflicts and learning techniques for improved adaptation and functionality of young adults in face of interparental conflicts.

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