International Journal of Asian Social Science

journal homepage: http://www.aessweb.com/journal-detail.php?id=5007

PARENTAL CONFLICT AND ITS EFFECTS ON YOUTH SELF ESTEEM (A STUDY AT UNIVERSITY OF PUNJAB)

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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted to probe the effects of parental conflict on youth self esteem. Objective of study was to explore reasons behind parental conflict, to measure the level of parental conflict on behavior of children, to find out change in the behavior of children, to identify the role of parents in the self esteem of children, to know how parent conflict and self esteem of children are related. Some 200 students from different departments of university of Punjab were selected by using appropriate sampling techniques. Questionnaire was designed to measure the level of impact of parental conflicts on children's self esteem. Perceived inter-parental conflict and parental style discrepancies in nurturance and in authoritarianism were significantly and negatively related to self-esteem, but the best predictors of self-esteem were the parental styles themselves. Warm nurturing parents were more likely to have high self-esteem children and demonstrated less conflict in marital partnerships. Correlations between marital conflict and self-esteem may reflect parental characteristics.

Key Words: Parental conflict, Self esteem, Child behavior

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6 Supporting Transparency, Accountability and Electoral Process in Pakistan, Punjab Lok Sujag Sahiwal.

INTRODUCTION

Family is a very important agent of socialization. It would be interesting to observe how youth adapt to the family systems in which they are born after the parental conflict. In recent years, the effect of family relationship has been an important study of the society. Parental relationships play a very important role in determining the self-esteem of children. Cohesive families are characterized by a family atmosphere of support and understanding. Members of the family need to feel free to voice their needs and concerns (Berg-Cross, Kidd, & Carr, 1990). A conflict exists when two people wish to carry out acts which are mutually inconsistent. They may both want to do the same thing, or they may want to do different things where the different things are mutually incompatible, such as when they both want to stay together but one wants to go to the cinema and the other to stay at home. A conflict is resolved when some mutually compatible set of actions is worked out. The term conflict in family refers to the violence between adults in the home as well as child abuse. Its negative impact is on members who witness such violence or abuse between parents. This paper adopts one of the definitions of family conflict, i.e. Intimate partner violence, used by World Health Organization (WHO, 2007). According to the definition provide d by the World Health Organization, family conflict and intimate partner violence refers to "any behavior within an intimate relationship that causes *physical, psychological or sexual* harm to those in the relationship." Conflict may gain different forms. Relationship conflicts occur because of the presence of strong negative emotions, misperceptions or stereotypes, poor communication or miscommunication, or repetitive negative behaviors .Parents have different ideas, opinions, values and priorities which cause disputes among them which have effect on their children. "The manner in which parents handle everyday marital conflicts has a significant effect on how secure their children feel, and, in turn, significantly affects their future emotional adjustment" (Stith et al., 2000; Cumming, M. E., 1995). When parents are in conflict, children are greatly affected. Such conflict has a profound effect on their children, causing many problems, such as behavior and academic difficulties. Parental attitudes have a strong impact not only on family relationships but also on the attitudes and behavior of children.

Self-esteem is a term used in psychology to reflect a person's overall evaluation or appraisal of his or her own worth. Feshbach & Weiner, (1991) define self-esteem as the positive or negative value a person places on his or her own attributes. Self-esteem is shaped both by the degree of discrepancy between a child's goals and his accomplishments, and by the degree of emotional support the child perceives from parents and peers. Self-esteem develops out of a child's experiences with success and failure. The value is ascribed to the activities at which he succeeds or fails, and the feedback he gets from parents about his performance (Tam Cai Lian, 2009). Feelings about us are self-esteem, and these feelings are clearly reflected by our behavior. Self-esteem is your control, your approach toward the "attacks" of reality. Your self-esteem is your appraisal, your evaluation and your feelings about yourself. Your opinion of the person who you have been living with since you were born: Yourself. Self esteem is a confidence in our ability to

think, to cope with the basic challenges of life and confidence in our right to be successful and happy. Researches describe that conflict between parents diminishes the parents role as protector, complicates the child's role identify, fails to teach effective conflict resolutions, puts the child in a loyalty bind. Many found that conflicts essentially stop children in their tracks they are less free to go about the business of being children, meeting the development tasks that are essential to forming a healthy self. It is perhaps best described as having a low opinion of oneself (either consciously or not), and/or feelings of being 'worthless'. It can surface in thoughts and in feelings and will often appear to manifest physically - in body postures, actions and health. Feelings of 'being stuck', Low motivation, Low energy levels, Lack of physical activity, Potentially destructive behaviors, Depression, Feeling helpless to change anything, Relationship difficulties: Low self esteem and divorce are unhappy partners. Social and psychological scientists found that both parental marital conflict and marital disruption increase the later anxiety and depression/withdrawal of children aged 6-14 children remaining in high conflict environment generally exhibit lower levels of parental conflicts but whose parents divorce or separate. These results support the possibility that marital disruption following high conflicts may actually improve the emotional well-being of children relative to a high conflict family status.

Cumming, M. E. (1995) found new studies on the impact of parental conflict behavior on their children's future behavior, found that the manner in which parents handle everyday marital conflicts has a significant effect on how secure their children feel, and, in turn, significantly affects their future emotional adjustment." A useful analogy is to think about emotional security as a bridge between the child and the world," Cummings said. "When the marital relationship is functioning well, it serves as a secure base, a structurally sound bridge to support the child's exploration and relationships with others. "When destructive marital conflict erodes the bridge, children may lack confidence and become hesitant to move forward, unable to find appropriate footing within themselves or in interaction with others." In both studies researchers controlled for any initial adjustment problems, thus further supporting the conclusion that destructive marital conflict was related to children's emotional insecurity and adjustment problems. Grych, H. J. (2005) exposure to parental conflict together with effective distress and psychological disorder within parents (usually the caretaking mother) is a greater hazard to children than are many other stressful events associated with divorce including acute loss due to separation from a parent (usually the father). They investigated the relationship between children's self-esteem and their perceptions of family cohesion. Closeness to the family was identified in terms of five family types (one- and two-parent cohesive, divided, parent coalition and isolated child. The results indicated that children from different family types experienced varying degrees of closeness and support. Furthermore, those children reporting little family support tended to score low levels on self-esteem. The importance of examining the parent-child relationships as well as parental interactions in studies of the effects of divorce on children is discussed.

Cumming, m. E. (1995) found that when the marital relationship is functioning well, it serves as a secure base, a structurally sound bridge to support the child exploration and relationship with others. When destructive marital conflict erodes the bridge, children may lack confidence and become hesitant to move forward, or may move forward in a deregulated way, unable to find appropriate footing within themselves or in interactions with others. Patrick T. Davies found that the stressfulness of witnessing several different types of conflict may have long term implications for children's functioning by directly altering their patterns of responding to those conflicts. Conflicts between parents may have distinct meanings and implications for the child and family system even after considering the effects of parenting difficulties. Grych, H. J. (2005) present the children's report of the conflict that they witnessed tend to be more closely associated with their adjustment than are parent reports of conflict, which typically assess the level of discord in a front of children. Children appraise how threatening a conflict is to their well being and to the harmony of the family, try to understand why it is occurring, and evaluate their ability to cope effectively.

Cummings, E. M. and Davies, P. (1994) found that they highlighted children's emotional, responses as a mediator of the impact of conflict on their adjustment. In another study, they proposes that exposure to inter-parental discord can make children more emotionally reactive to later stressors. Cummings (1995) found that the stress caused by exposure to anger is perhaps the most notable consequences of parental conflict on children. Children as young s 18 months old become emotionally upset when they witness angry exchanges between adults, and by the age of 5 0r 6 children's distress is evident in their attempts to intervene in the conflict. Elizabeth S. Thayer and Jeffrey Zimmerman (2001) found that the conflict between parents accentuates the child's anxiety about abandonment. Joan and Robert (2003) found that these children are likely to be hyper vigilant and distrusting of others, and they do not expect the world to be a co-operative or protective place. These children turn inwards, unto themselves. Garrity, B.C. and Baris, A. M. (1994) found that the most important reason for working out a contentious relationship is that high conflict has far-reaching negative effects on children. Those who witness intense bitterness between their parents and are caught repeatedly in loyalty binds are at high risk for later emotional disturbance. Parental conflict interrupts many of the critical tasks of psychological development. It changes the nature of the parent-child relationship, creates anxiety and distress over stimulation's and frightens children, weakens parents, protective capacity and compromises identify formation. Most of all, it leaves children powerless to do anything about it. In another study children's psychological adjustments is very directly affected by the amount and intensify of adult anger they experience. The more severe the conflict, the greater the effect.

Seltzer, A. J. (1994) found that tensions, anxiety, and regression, feelings of confusion and embarrassment , feelings of responsibility and self blame , withdrawal or clinging behavior at transitions, long- term emotional and behavior at transitions, long-term emotional and behavioral wounds, feelings of disillusionment ,fear, insecurity, or vulnerability, temper tantrums schools problems or self –destructive behaviors". Researchers found that although active quarrelling

predicted poor outcomes in children, active fighting between parents combined with a lack of warmth toward each other and a lack of concern for family members tripled the rate of juvenile delinquency in these children" In other study he found tat chronic conflicts causes chronic distress and agitation in children as well as a loss of emotional control .In a home marked by conflicts and unpredictability, children form insecure attachments to their parents. They do not have a deep and abiding trust in their caretakers".

E. Mark Cummings and Patrick Davies (1994) found that Exposure to inter adult discord has significant impact on children's emotional, behavioral, interpersonal and even physiological functioning how the parents fight and whether they are able to resolve their differences probably holds the key to understanding the impact of marital discord on children. Of all the problems associated with discordant marriages, marital conflict is emerging as a primary predictor of maladjustment in children. In another study they found that children in high conflict are more likely to view themselves and their social world in overly negative and hostile ways. Children are affected by more exposure to marital discord. Anger between adult is stressful and emotionally arousing for children of all ages, and it also increases their aggressiveness. Repeated exposure sensitizes children, increasing their arousal and aggression when exposed to anger and also their tendency to intervene in parents fight. Because conflict creates distress for children and is linked with the development of mental health problems in children family conflict is of societal concern and constitutes a significant social problem. In another study they found that both the specific characteristics of an angry environment in the home and the children's relative risk for the developmental of mental health problems.

Conceptual Framework
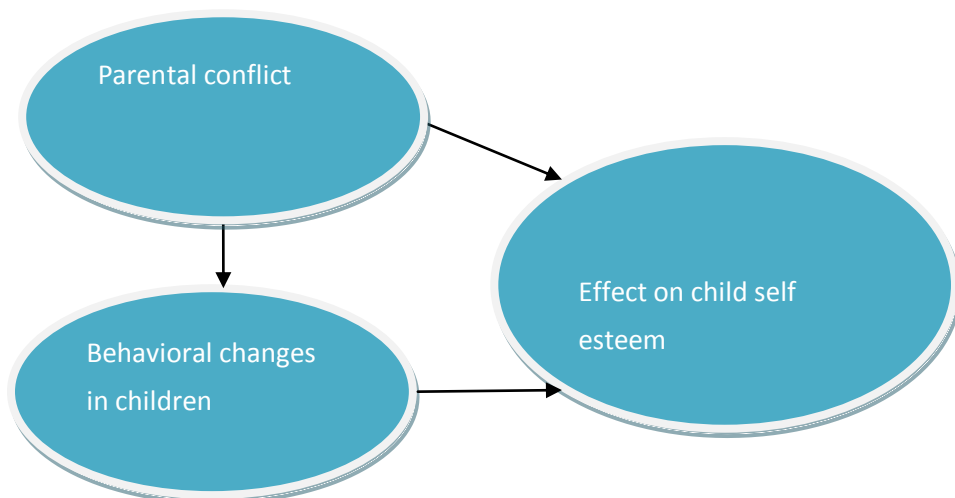
Objectives of Study

1.   To measure reasons behind parental conflict
2.   To measure the level of continue and longer parental conflict on behavior of children.

3.   To measure the level of change in the behavior of children.

4.   To see the role of parents in the self esteem of children.

5.   To see how parental conflict and self esteem of a children is related.

METHODS

The data for present study was gathered from 200 students of different departments of university of Punjab to achieve the objectives of the study. A survey was designed on quantitative bases to investigate parental conflict and its affect on youth self esteem. A statistical generalization was required to evaluate impact of parental conflict on youth self esteem. During survey, all participants volunteer their-selves. Anyhow an assurance of anonymity and confidentiality was given to them. A representative sample of population was selected from Punjab University Lahore. Students were selected from different departments of Punjab University. In this research probability was used in which purposive sampling was preferred another sampling was preferred another sampling. The total sample for the present study consisted of 200 students, five faculties were selected, under each faculties, two departments were chosen, 20 for each departments, 10 were male and 10 females. Self administered questionnaire was used as a tool for data collection in this research. The main reasons for using the questionnaire was that all of the respondents were well educated who understand the questionnaire without any difficulty. This method of data collection is less time consuming for both respondents and researchers, and the response rate is higher in it. Students are from different departments researchers can easily drop out the questionnaire and fill out them. There are four sections in this questionnaire: Demographic Profile, Parental Conflict, Changes in Behavior, and Effect on Youth Self Esteem.

DISCUSSION

An attempt is made to discuss achievement of objectives of the study in light of relevant literature. Our study objectives are to measure reasons behind parental conflict, to measure the level of continue and longer parental conflict on behavior of children, to measure the level of change in the behavior of children, to see the role of parents in the self esteem of children, to see how parental conflict and self esteem of children is related. A hypothesis was established "The higher level of parental conflict, the higher its effect on the self esteem of youth." To test the above hypothesis a survey was conducted as described earlier. Results of the survey are also mentioned in previous chapter.

Parental Conflict

A huge majority of 50.8% showed response that there is conflict between their parents. These findings support the findings of previous researches of Timothy and Greg (2000). 36% of respondents told that there is conflict due to 'lack of trust' and 34% said that way of dealing with in-laws is responsible for parental conflict. 41.7% admitted that their parents demonstrate some sort

of affection with each other. A majority i.e., 38.3% respond that their parents often hit each other. 45.8% of respondents told that their father help their mother in household tasks.

Changes in Behavior

40.8% said that they feel disturbance when see conflict between parents. These findings are evidence to support the results of Joan and Robert (2003).35.8% of respondents feel themselves inferior when they compare their parents with other parents. 37.55 consider that their academic performance is affected by parent's conflict. 48.3% feel insecure when see conflict between parents. These findings support the notion Children who live in families characterized by high levels of inter-parental conflict have been found to be at increased risk of adjustment problems (Harold, Fincham, Osbourne, & Conger, 1997). Almost 23% of respondents are not able to express emotions (happiness, sorrows) with parents. 61.7% of respondents often you feel anxiety due to parent conflict.

Effect on Self Esteem

56% of respondents feel negative impact of parental conflict on their self esteem. Results are consistent with previous findings of Paley, Conger, & Harold (2000). 45.8% of respondents feel loneliness just because of parental conflict. A huge majority i.e., 67% are always concerned about what others say about them. 52% always focus on their failures instead of successes. These results are consistent with previous findings of Harold, Aitken, & Shelton (2007). 56% feel anxious in new social situation when they don't know what is expected from them. 71% rely on opinion of others to make decisions. 39% feel fear of criticism, rejection, or disapproval.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that parents serve as models to their children and children tend to imitate their parents' behaviors in their own relationships. Observing and practicing behaviors within the family context, such as conflict handing behavior, have strong influence on the children to reproduce those strategies in their own relationships with their couples. Meanwhile, positive interaction between parents and their children during conflict can occur, if the inter-parental conflict is managed correctly. In addition, positive interactions between parents and children are linked to the positive behavior between siblings. We can say that parental conflicts have chronic affect on youth self esteem. In different studies it is mentioned that parental conflict adversely affects personality of children. They show feelings of being stuck, Low motivation, Low energy levels, Lack of physical activity, Potentially destructive behaviors, Depression, Feeling helpless to change anything, Relationship difficulties, poor academic performance, Low self esteem. We also find that parental conflict leaves gap in the personality of children, they show low self esteem which creates problem for their future life because personality is not well developed and they also indulge in conflict in their professional and married life.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We started our research with having different topics in our mind like commercialization of female, parental conflict and its effect on children, household management and spousal conflict. Finally we take research on parental conflict and its effect on youth self esteem. Further recommendations for future research are that further researches can be developed on following paths:

- Parental conflict leads to aggressive personality.
- Parental separation and maladjustment of children.
- Parental alienation, dynamics as child abuse.
- Negative parental influence and spousal conflict.
- Impact of parental conflict on children's future development.
- Parental conflict and its effect on the emotional security of children.
- Parental conflict and its negative impact on the children's mental health.

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