

Parent-Adolescents Conflicts and Their Impact on Students' Academic Performance and Self-Esteem in Saudi Arabia 2024

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ABSTRACT

Background: Having a strong emotional tie among family members, including parents, children, and other relatives, fosters long-term commitment since family members are crucial to human life. In addition to their peer group, which ultimately reveals the social development of teenagers, adolescents also experience that their family makes decisions on how they will adjust to society in the future. Any disagreements between parents, whether favorable or unfavorable, are included in the complex and multidimensional concept of parent-adolescent conflict.

This study aims: to identify the parent-adolescents conflicts and its relation with their school achievement and self-esteem.

Methods: The study employed a descriptive correlational methodology. 1018 teenagers were enlisted in this research. It was held at ten government preparatory schools in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, five of which were in the city and five of which were in the countryside. This study used four tools: adolescent self-esteem measure, parent-adolescent concerns checklist, school achievement of adolescents, and demographic questionnaire for adolescents and their parents.

Results: showed that 93.6 percent of the teens in the study had a quarrel with their parents. Higher academic achievement was associated with more disagreement between teenagers and their parents ($p=0.004$). However, the teenagers' self-esteem and parent-adolescent conflict did not statistically significantly correlate.

Conclusion: The majority of teenagers experienced confrontation with their parents more frequently, but it was not as intense. Adolescent school achievement was positively impacted by parent-adolescent conflict.

Recommendation: In order to positively interact with their children, parents need be aware of the physical, cognitive, and psychosocial changes and requirements of teenagers. All students in schools should have their self-esteem evaluated on a regular basis in order to identify and address issues early.

Keywords: Parent-Adolescent Conflicts, Academic Performance and Self-Esteem.

INTRODUCTION

Conflict is an inevitable part of social relationships, and disagreements often arise between parents and children within families. During the adolescent period, parent-child conflict tends to occur more frequently and intensively, and adolescents experience more conflict with their parents compared to their peers^(1, 2). This heightened conflict between adolescents and their parents can be attributed, in part, to the developmental drives of adolescence, which push adolescents to seek greater independence from their parents while simultaneously desiring closer connections with their peers⁽³⁾.

In addition, cognitive development during this period allows adolescents to differentiate between closed-field relationships (such as those with parents) and open-field relationships (such as those with peers) and become more aware of the vulnerability of open-field relationships to rupture when conflicts arise⁽⁴⁾. Consequently,

adolescents tend to carefully manage and minimize conflict with their peers while displaying a less protective attitude when it comes to handling disagreements within family relationships.

Adolescence is a period marked by distinct shifts in self-definition, social, emotional, and cognitive development as well as physical growth. Additionally, the teenager and their family often perceive it as a difficult time in their lives⁽⁵⁾. Any debate, disagreement, or difference on a matter that comes up in family life is considered conflict. Nonetheless, the concept of parent-adolescent conflict is intricate and multidimensional since it encompasses all disagreements, whether favorable or unfavorable, between parents⁽⁶⁾. It is defined as a dyadic, interpersonal situation including obvious behavioral disapproval as disputes, disagreements and squabbles⁽⁷⁾. Therefore communication and conflict between adolescent and their parents often encompass renegotiating rules, roles and relationships regarding everyday topics as activities, friends, responsibilities and school⁽⁸⁾.

Increased parental-adolescent conflict in early adolescence and the detrimental effects of conflicts in middle adolescence may be caused by adolescents' growing struggles with autonomy. The primary source of disputes between parents and teenagers is the misalignment of their expectations of appropriate conduct and the appropriate timing of power, independence, and duty transitions⁽⁹⁾.

Some conflicts with parents can be considered a normal part of family relations throughout adolescence and it has a well-defined function in the adolescent development of autonomy and individuation⁽¹⁰⁾. While, when a lot of and excessive frequent conflicts may be a predisposing factor for adolescent psychosocial adjustment and well-being⁽⁹⁾.

According to Shehata & Ramadan (2010)⁽¹¹⁾ & Shibeshi (2015)⁽¹²⁾, the way parents socialize their kids may also play a role in causing conflict between them. The desire of young adults for greater autonomy and independence from their parents is also indicated by arguments on issues such as daily tasks, freedom, rights, and relationships⁽¹³⁾. Although disputes involving religious, political, or social issues are less common, they are nonetheless seen as delicate subjects.

Similarly, Nebel-Schwalm (2006)⁽¹⁴⁾, revealed that performance achievement was an important sign of change and modification as it has been related to many factors like styles of parents, parents' involvement, conflict within the family, school and homework activities, intellectual capacity and socio-economic condition. In addition; marital conflict could be a factor effect on parent-adolescent conflict and academic achievement. Academic achievement may be a cause of stress and conflict in families as conflict can get up when adolescent wasn't doing as well in school as their parents would like⁽¹⁵⁾. Higher levels of parent-adolescent conflict could have a negative impact on adolescents' and parents' psychological well-being and their satisfaction of life. This could cause higher levels of internalizing problems such as low self-esteem⁽¹⁶⁾.

Numerous fundamental psychological phenomena, both good and negative, are used to assess self-esteem. Positive emotional states, increased drive, and effective coping mechanisms have all been associated with high self-esteem. A person with low self-esteem would engage in more disputes and have inadequate coping mechanisms for stressful situations⁽¹⁷⁾. Deshpande and Chhabriya (2013)⁽¹⁸⁾ stated that due to the generation gap between parents and their adolescents and inability of parents to appreciate their adolescents, conflicts develop. Also, reported that mild punishment from parents can result in high self-esteem in adolescents" as they view their parents as their caretaker.

Many Saudi researchers have claimed that the Saudi family has been affected by the rapid development of technology⁽¹⁹⁻²¹⁾. For instance, ALZhrani (2015)⁽²⁰⁾ found that family cohesion was negatively associated with internet use, also parents who spent a lot of time on computer or smart phone devices had marital problems. In a related study, the highest number of internet users was mostly aged between 11 to 35 years old⁽²¹⁾.

According to the age of highest disagreement begin when the young adults were between 13 - 16 years old; that is during the years of beginning freedom from parental dominance. This increase may be due to a number of factors; the puberty's biological conversions, intellectual variations including increased idealism and logical reasoning, social changes focused on autonomy and individuality, maturational changes in parents, and expectations that are violated by parents and adolescents. The adolescent compares her/ hisparents to an ideal standard and then criticizes their flows⁽²²⁾. Therefore, the present study aimed to identify the parent- adolescent conflicts and its relation with their performance achievement and self-esteem.

METHODS

A Descriptive correlational research design was used for this study. It was conducted at ten government preparatory schools in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, five of which were in the city and five of which were in the countryside. From each school, two classes for each grade were chosen randomly. Each class included about (30-40) students. The researchers interviewed all children to fill the sheet in the selected classes. The total sample was 1018 adolescents. This study used four tools: **Tool I:** Demographic questionnaire for adolescent and their parents which included two parts. Part one: Personal data for adolescent as gender, age, school grades, the number of siblings, birth order, residence, the living status of the adolescent and presence of chronic illness. Part two: Personal data for parents as age, history of chronic illness, education and occupation.

Tool II: Parent-Adolescent issues checklist. This scale developed by Robin and Foster (1989)⁽²³⁾ to assess

frequency and intensity of the parent-adolescent conflict. It consists of forty-four items covering conflict topics. Adolescents point to whether or not each of the issues (e.g., "performing homework," "sleeping time") had been the topic of conflict with their parents during the previous four weeks. Their answers were computed in two ways: Frequency of conflict: Count the number of issues marked "yes." when adolescents circle 13 or more items "yes" considered had frequent conflict. Higher scores indicate higher levels of conflict frequency. Intensity of issues: For issues marked "yes," add intensity ratings and divide by the number of issues marked "yes" to obtain mean intensity rating. The intensity of conflict was calculated by summing the products of each conflict intensity topic (based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1= "very calm" to 5= "very angry"). The scale translated into Arabic by the researchers. The content validity was done by 5 experts (two in the pediatric nursing field, one in community health nursing and two in psychiatric nursing) the content validity index was 0.73 and reliability were tested, by using Cronbach's alpha and it was $r=0.83$

Tool III: Adolescent Self-Esteem Scale. The original scale was constructed by **Rosenberg Self- Esteem Scale (1965)**⁽²⁴⁾. It includes ten items on a four-point scale from "strongly agree = 4" to "strongly disagree =1". Final scores range from 10 to 40. Higher scores represent higher levels of self-esteem and lower scores represent lower levels of self- esteem. The scale was reliable by using Cronbach's alpha values $r=0.88$.

Tool VI: Adolescents' Academic Achievement Tool (Dornbusch et al., 1987)⁽²⁵⁾, it was measured based on adolescents' self-reports on the most recent exam scores over the last year. Responses that best represented their school grades were indicated on the questionnaire (e.g., 5 = "mostly excellent in different subjects (A's") to 1 = "mostly failed in different subjects (F's"). Test-retest correlations for this measure range from .85 and .85. Cronbach's alpha for this study was 0.73.

An official permission to collect data was obtained from the prime minister of education. Tool one was developed by the researchers and was tested for its content validity by five experts in the pediatric, community and psychiatric nursing field it was 0.9. Tool reliability was done by using Cronbach alpha coefficient, it was $r=0.98$. A written consent was obtained from the studied adolescents to collect the data after explaining the purpose and the nature of the study. A pilot study was carried on (10%) of the adolescents. It was conducted to assess the clarity of the study tool and the time needed to fulfill the sheet. As the results of the pilot study, the necessary modifications were done (two items as "using the television" to "watching television and using social media" and "drinking beer or other alcoholic beverages" to "drinking beer" to match with our community tradition).

The researchers interviewed the adolescents during classes of activities and physical exercise (PE). The researchers distributed the sheet for all adolescents and they were waiting for filling the sheet, the time needed about 45 – 60 minutes for each class. The data were collected during the period of four months from January to April 2024.

The research proposal was approved by Ethical Committee of KSA. The adolescent students were informed about the study and they were advised that; they were under no obligation to participate or not in the study and the study will not affect their education or assessment. Confidentiality and anonymity was assured. Adolescents had the rights to refuse to participate of the study without any rational.

Data were coded, entered and cleaned using SPSS 28. Data analysis was done in the form of univariate analysis: descriptive statistics (frequency & percent for qualitative data, mean \pm SD for quantitative data). Bivariate analysis: cross tabulation. Chi-square test (X^2) and correlation coefficient were used to test the difference between the proportions of qualitative data. Statistical significance level was considered when $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ for all statistical tests.

RESULTS

A total of 1018 adolescents, aged from 12 – 15 years with mean age 14.06 ± 1.10 were included in the study. Thirty-two of the adolescents were in grade one and (36.9%) were in grade two. The first and second birth order constitutes three-fifths of studied sample (60.7%) and about one-third of adolescents have 1-2 siblings. The mean of mothers' age was 39.11 ± 5.51 while the mean age of the fathers was 46.56 ± 6.76 . Thirty percent of mothers and more than one-third of fathers had higher education.

Table (1): Presents rank order according to the highest and lowest topics frequency and intensity of discussion over last four weeks. The table revealed that, the most common topics that increased incidence of conflict between adolescent and their parents were making too much noise at home (76.5%), watching TV or using the internet (74.4%), cleaning bedroom (74.3), sleeping time (73.3), arranging clothes (72.7%), performing homework (72.4%), friends should they have (72.0%), fighting with brothers and sisters (71.8%), allowance (71.4%), and selection of new clothes (69.2%). Regarding conflict intensity; making too much noise at home and fighting with brothers and sisters were the most intense topics with mean intensity 1.8 ± 1.6 and 1.9 ± 1.8 respectively.

While the lowest topics that increase incidence of conflict between adolescent and their parents were using drugs (49.4), earning money away from the house (46.5%), bothering adolescent when he/she wants to be left alone (45.6%), going on dates (44.7%), buying records, games, toys, and other things (42.8%), bothering parents when

they want to be left alone (42.5%), cursing (40.1%), smoking/spit tobacco (30.5%), and drinking beer (24.2%).

Table 1: Rank Order according to the Highest and lowest topics 'Frequency and intensity

Highest topics	Frequency %	Intensity Mean±SD
1.Making too much noise at home	76.5	1.8±1.6
2.Watching television or using social media	74.4	1.6±1.5
3.Cleaning bedroom	74.3	1.4±1.4
4.Sleeping time	73.3	1.3±1.2
5.Arranging clothes	72.7	1.3±1.3
6.Performing home work	72.4	1.3±1.4
7.Friends should they have	72.0	1.1±1.1
8.Fighting with brothers and sisters	71.8	1.9±1.8
9.Allowance	71.4	1.0±1.1
10.Selection of new clothes	69.2	1.1±1.0
Lowest topics		
11.Using drugs	49.4	0.8±1.2
12.Earning money away from the house	46.5	1.1±1.4
13.Bothering adolescent when he/she wants to be left alone	45.6	0.8±1.3
14.Going on dates	44.7	1.0±1.3
15.Buying games, toys, and other things	42.8	0.7±1.1
16.Bothering parents when they want to be left alone	42.5	0.8±1.3
17.Cursing	40.1	0.9±1.5
18.Smoking/spittobacco	30.5	0.8±1.6
19.Drinkingbeer	24.2	0.7±1.5

Table (2): Represented relation between characteristics of the studied adolescents and the experience of the conflicts with their parents. There was statistically significant difference between school achievement, gender, mother's occupation and parent- adolescent conflict. The frequency of parent- adolescent conflict would increase with studied adolescents who had higher scores of school achievement (P<0.004). In addition; male gender, rural areas and the adolescents' who living either with their fathers or mothers were factors that increase parent-adolescent conflict with statistically significant (P<0.004, P< 0.05and P<0.03 respectively).

Table 2:Relation between characteristics of studied adolescents and the experience of conflicts with their parents

Items	Total(N =1018)	Conflictn=953		No conflict n=65		X ²	p-value
		No	%	No	%		
Performance achievement						17.23	0.004
Most excellent	363	325	89.5	38	10.5		
Excellent and most very good	301	286	95.0	15	5.0		
Very good and most good	175	169	96.5	6	3.5		
Good and most pass	126	123	97.6	3	2.4		
Pass and most failed	53	50	94.3	3	5.7		
Residence.						8.38	0.004
Urban	544	498	91.6	46	8.4		
Rural	474	455	96	19	4.0		
Gender						3.26	0.05
Male	494	470	(95.1)	24	4.9		
Female	524	483	92.2	41	7.8		
The living status of the child						8.79	0.04
With his/her father due to Divorce or mother's death	8	8	100	0	0.0		
With his/her mother due to Divorce or father's death	45	44	97.8	1	2.2		
With his/her parents	810	749	92.5	61	7.5		
With his/her parents in the Family house	155	152	98.1	3	1.9		

* Level of significance at P=<0.05.

Table (3): Illustrated correlation between the characteristic of adolescents and their parents and parent-adolescent

conflict. There was statistically significant positive correlation between the residence, birth order with the parents-adolescent conflict (R 0,004 and 0.039 respectively) while a statistically negative correlation found between the adolescents' school grades, ages with the parents- adolescent conflict (R 0,000 and 0.005 respectively).

Table 3: Correlation between the characteristic of adolescents and their parents and Parent-adolescent conflict

Parent's adolescent characteristic	Parent's adolescent conflict	
	r	Significance
Mother's age	0.19	0.544
Father's age	-.019-	0.538
Mother's education	-.028-	0.378
Father's education	.015	0.636
Mother's occupation	-.043-	0.175
Father's occupation	.042	0.183
Parents' chronicillness(Yes)	0.22	0.5
Residence.	.091	0.004
School grades(levels)	-.122-	0.000
Number of siblings	.045	0.156
Age/year	-.088-	0.005
Birth order	.066	0.039
Child chronicillness	-.010-	0.759

Table (4): Revealed the relation between adolescents' self-esteem and parent-adolescent conflicts scores. There was no statistically significant relation between the adolescents' self-esteem and parent-adolescent conflict.

Table 4:Relation between adolescents' self-esteem and parent-adolescent conflicts scores

Items	Total	Conflictn=953		No conflict n=65		X ²	P.value
		No	%	No	%		
Low self-esteem(<20)	387	357	92.2	30	7.8	0.57	0.3
Highself-esteem(>20)	631	596	94.5	35	5.5		

Table (5): Showed relation between school achievement, self-esteem and parent-adolescent conflicts. There was highly statistically significant relation between school achievement of adolescent and level of self-esteem (P<0.000 and P<0.039respectively). The higher the percentage of school achievement among adolescent (with and without conflict), had a higher self-esteem.

Table 5:Relation between school achievement, self-esteem and parent-adolescent conflicts

Items	Total	Level of self esteem				X ²	P.value
		Low level of self esteemn=378		High level of self-esteemn=631			
School achievement with conflict		No	%	No	%	0.143	0.000
Most excellent	325	144	44.3	181	55.7		
Excellent and most very good	286	118	41.3	168	58.7		
Very good and most good	169	46	27.2	123	72.8		
Good and most pass	123	37	30.1	86	69.9		
Pass and most failed	50	12	24.0	38	76.0		
School achievement without conflict						0.257	0.039
Most excellent	38	22	57.9	16	42.1		
Excellent and most very good	15	4	26.7	11	73.3		
Very good and most good	6	3	50.0	3	50.0		
Good and most pass	3	1	33.3	2	66.7		
Pass and most failed	3	0	0.0	3	100		

DISCUSSION

Adolescence is a unique period of transition marked by both physical and psychosocial changes. Individuals in this developmental stage undergo dramatic pubertal changes and are capable of increasingly abstract and complex reasoning. Family relationships are also altered as the process of differentiation begins to take place. This is a time when adolescents rely more on peers, seek increased independence, and are less willing to see

themselves as part of a hierarchy that is headed by their parents⁽²⁶⁾. Adolescents are often confused about their role and are torn between their responsibilities as growing adults and their desires as children. Family relationships are also altered as the process of differentiation begins to take place. As a result, the parent-adolescent relationship experiences increased conflict and decreased closeness⁽²⁷⁾.

According to the current study, early adolescence was when parent-adolescent conflict occurred more frequently, although it wasn't as intense. These findings were in line with research by Smetana et al. (2006)⁽²⁸⁾ and Ivana (2013)⁽¹⁶⁾, which indicated that early adolescence was a time of greater parent-adolescent conflict. Additionally, there was more disputes between teenagers and their parents, but it was typically not as intense. These findings are consistent with Melching (2011)⁽⁷⁾, who claimed that early adolescence is marked by a number of puberty-related physical, emotional, and intellectual changes. Conflict severity and frequency are therefore more closely correlated with this age.

Based on the results of the current study, the most frequent source of conflict arises during routine family activities like bedtime, cleaning the bedroom, doing homework, organizing clothes, watching TV or using social media, creating excessive noise at home, arguing with siblings, deciding which friends to have, allowance, and choosing new clothes. These findings aligned with those of Ivana (2013)⁽¹⁶⁾ and OzmeteEmine&BayogluAyse (2009)⁽²⁹⁾. This might be because teenagers are obsessed with modern technology and spend much of their time on social media and watching television. As a result, they squandered time and postponed routine tasks like tidying the bedroom, putting clothes in order, and going to bed.

This is confirmed by Shah et al. (2016)⁽³⁰⁾, who stated that the use of social media on a website or mobile device was the primary source of the conflict. Similarly, Blease (2015)⁽³¹⁾, Griffiths et al. (2016)⁽³²⁾ found that frequent internet use and Facebook depression were two characteristics that frequently lead to increased conflict in young children. According to GongalaSagari (2017)⁽³³⁾, for young adults, the statement "I'm growing and I can take care of myself" is essential. However, parents' perspectives differ. Parents understand that at this crucial age, their young adults need additional care. They are afraid that their children delaying homework and obtaining low scores at school or a bad boy or girl will be a friend to the adolescent and can affect his way of thinking.

According to the study's findings, teenagers who fought with their siblings and/or made excessive noise at home experienced more conflicts. This could be because teenagers' kids are more likely to experience emotional and behavioral issues. Mood swings are typical among them, and these changes are natural for them at this time⁽³³⁾.

Children frequently request greater freedom as they approach adolescence. Parents must balance their desire for their kids to be self-assured and capable with their awareness that the world may be a scary place with threats to their safety and well-being⁽³⁴⁾. In addition, the amount of allowance for the adolescent child can also be a factor that increases the incidence of parent-adolescent conflict. Adolescent dressing, hairstyle, and sense of fashion also change, mostly to something that parents may not approve of.

On the subjects of drug use, alcohol consumption, and tobacco use, our culture and religion forbid and discourage these behaviors. However, there was no conflict between teenagers and their parents as a result of troubling parents when they wanted to be left alone or bothering teenagers when they wanted to be left alone. This may be explained by the fact that teenagers were content when they were left alone at home, felt liberated, and could engage in their hobbies without any limitations. These findings concurred with those of Pajkic Ivana (2013)⁽¹⁶⁾ and OzmeteEmine&BayogluAyse (2009)⁽²⁹⁾ as well.

The study results showed that there was a significant difference between parent-adolescent conflict and school achievement, the higher the school achievements, the more frequency of conflict occur, This result disagree with a study of Branje, (2009)⁽⁹⁾, who reported a negative association between parent-adolescent conflict and adolescent school performance and the same results reported by Onongha, (2015)⁽¹⁵⁾ who found that students with low school achievement have more conflict with their parents than students who have high performance.

Parental disputes may be the cause of this outcome, as positive stress encourages adolescents to pursue higher education. Furthermore, parents' primary concern is their children's academic success, which leads to parental conflict as they put pressure on their teenagers to perform to the best of their abilities. According to a study by Shibeshi (2015)⁽¹²⁾, the primary cause of conflict is school-related issues. Also, Onongha (2015)⁽¹⁵⁾ said that when adolescents aren't performing as well in school as their parents would like, it can lead to tension and stress in the family.

According to Deshpande & Chhabriya (2013)⁽¹⁸⁾, conflicts arise because of the generational divide between parents and their teenagers and the parents' incapacity to value their teenagers. According to the results of the current study, over half of teenagers experience conflict and have high self-esteem. This finding is consistent with Deshpande & Chhabriya (2013)⁽¹⁸⁾ & Driscoll (2013)⁽³⁵⁾ who found that adolescents who receive mild parental punishment have high self-esteem because they see their parents as their caregivers and occasionally protectors. One interpretation of this would be that adolescents are going through a difficult period and are dealing with a number of changes, from their bodies to their friendships.

The current study discovered a strong positive relationship between parental adolescent conflict and residence. Over half of the children under study are from rural areas and have parents with high levels of education, either secondary, university, or above. This can be explained by the fact that parents with high levels of education

compare their kids to their classmates and cousins in an effort to earn good grades and please their parents. Additionally, there was a statistically significant negative link between the gender of the adolescents under study and the conflict between the parents and the adolescents; it seems that male adolescents had more conflict with their parents than female adolescents.

Regarding the parents-adolescent conflict, there is also a strong statistically negative association between the ages of the teenagers and their school grades (levels); the lower the age and school grades, the higher the parent-adolescent conflict. This outcome supports the findings of Helland et al. (2017)⁽³⁶⁾ that parent-adolescent conflict rises and peaks in the early stages of adolescence and is linked to the onset of puberty.

The present study demonstrated a statistically significant positive relationship between parents-adolescent conflict and birth order, with the highest levels of conflict observed among teenagers in the first birth order. This result was consistent with the findings of Helland et al. (2017)⁽³⁶⁾, who show that, in comparison to younger siblings, parent-adolescent disputes are often higher during the teenage transition of the firstborn child. However, there is a negative relationship between the child's chronic illness and the conflict between parents and adolescents. The child with a chronic illness has less conflict, which may indicate that the parents of that child try to meet their needs.

CONCLUSION

According to the results of the present study, most teenagers had conflict problems more frequently; however the intensity of the conflicts wasn't severe. Adolescent academic achievement was positively impacted by parent-adolescent conflict. Parent-adolescent conflict and the teenagers' self-esteem did not have a statistically significant relationship. However, there was a statistically significant correlation between adolescents' self-esteem and their higher school accomplishment scores, both with and without conflict. Rural location, first births, ages 14–15; first grade, male gender, housewife mothers, and adolescents living with either their mother or father were all linked to a higher frequency of conflict.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Parents should be aware of physical, cognitive and psychosocial changes and needs of adolescence period to deal with their children positively. Should be implementing an educational program about parent-adolescent conflicts to include parents and adolescents viewpoints about conflict.

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