Effects of inter-parental conflict on college student’s self-efficacy in Hamadan, Iran

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to determine the effects of inter-parental conflict on college student’s self-efficacy. This cross-sectional study was conducted on 374 randomly selected college students of Medical Science University aged 17 to 19 years old in Hamadan, Iran. The Inventory of Children’s Perception of Inter-parental Conflict Scale and the General Self-Efficacy Scale were used. Results of Pearson correlation coefficient indicated that low inter-parental conflict had positive significant correlation with high students’ self-efficacy, while high inter-parental conflict had negative correlation with low self-efficacy (p<.05). The result of the study also showed that within CPIC subscales perception of threat to self had highest negative relationship with self-efficacy, followed by conflict properties and self blame. Moreover, results implied that self-efficacy among late adolescents can be improved through positive parents relationship and parents-adolescent relationship (p<.05). Thus, it is suggested that parents prepared with appropriate knowledge and skills for their adolescent’s needs and development.

Keywords: inter-parental conflict; self-efficacy; adolescent

1. Introduction

Self-efficacy is a major element for success in the life span and related to psychological, physical and social health (Bandura, 1994). It is the sense of belief that one’s actions have an effect on the environment (Steinberg and Silk, 2002). High self-efficacy people have greater cognitive ingenuity and effectiveness in managing their situation,
and set goals for themselves while low self-efficacy has been associated with anxiety, depression, low aspiration and achievement followed by negative effects in social emotional relationships (Bandura, 1997; Mazaheri et al., 2011; Moura et al., 2010). Family is viewed as a primary source for adolescent’s self-efficacy and well-being. A study by Sadock and Sadock, (2003) has shown that family’ social support has had a negative effect on adolescent depression and a direct correlation with adolescent social self-efficacy.

Canary and Canary 2013 suggests that inter-parental conflict affects on children’s self-efficacy for conflict management, or s/he believes that has ability to control turbulent situations. Individual with high self-efficacy has better ability to manage conflict. Adolescent and adult with high self-efficacy have more positive strategy and tactics for managing conflict than who have low self-efficacy beliefs.

Adolescence, in particular, is the focus of the present study because it is a distinct developmental stage in childhood. Although no stage of life is ever free of problems, adolescence has been described as a time of psychosocial confusion. Bandura (1989) describe this period of time as "storm and stress". However, most adolescents pass this stage without excessive trouble or conflict. In other hand, Adolescents are more cognitively developed than younger children, which may contribute to adolescents having an increased likelihood of involvement in the inter-parental conflict because they are more capable than younger children (Schulz et al., 2005). This greater capability may provide adolescents with a unique experience, awareness, and insight into the family environment that may not be available to younger children. Also, adolescents’ involvement in inter-parental conflict may make them feel responsible for resulting problems (Bosco et al., 2003). Freshman students entering college must settle with the developmental tasks such as separating from their family and adapting to the university conditions. Therefore, the aim of this study was to determine the effects of inter-parental conflicts on college student’s self-efficacy.

2. Methods

A cross-sectional study was performed among 374 randomly selected freshman students aged between 17 -19 years old in Hamadan, Iran. Data was collected by a structured questionnaire including information on background characteristics; the Children’s Perception of Inter-parental Conflict Scale (CPIC) and the General Self-Efficacy Scale. Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression (MLR) analysis were utilized to determine the relations between inter-parental conflict and students’ self-efficacy.

The Children’s Perception of Inter-parental Conflict Scale (CPIC) measured adolescent’s perceptions, interpretations and responses to inter-parental conflict (Grych, 1992). A 44-item of CPIC consisted of three factors scale: 17 items for conflict properties, 14 items for threat to self, and 13 items for self-blame. For each item, student indicated how true each statement on three-point Likert scale "1= False", "2= Sort of true","3 = True". Higher scores reflected higher inter-parental conflict. In this study, Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of reliability of the total CPIC scale was 0.910.

The General Self-Efficacy Scale included 10 items (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). A 4-point likert type scale from "1=not true at all of me" to "4= very true" was used. Higher score of GSE show higher self-efficacy. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of reliability in current study for the GSE scale was 0.830.

3. Results

The respondents’ perception of inter-parental conflict score ranged from 48 to 104 with a mean score of 73.95 (S.D=14.38). The median (74.00) and 5% trimmed (72.49) mean was not different from the mean value indicating no extreme cases. The values obtained for the 25th and 75th percentile suggested that the respondents had CPIC score between 62.0 and 86.0. Based on the EDA, the distribution of scores was within acceptable limits and show normal distribution. The results indicated that mean score of conflict properties subscale was highest, followed by self-blame and threat to self. Based on mean split, the scores of children’s perception of inter-parental conflict divided into two levels of low and high. The results indicated that 79.7% of the students reported low score of inter-parental conflicts (Table 1). In present study, low level scores on the CPIC indicated a participant with relatively low report of conflict between their parents at home.
Table 1. Respondents’ perception of inter-parental conflicts and self-efficacy (N=374)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total CIPC</td>
<td></td>
<td>110</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>79.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low level (44-87)</td>
<td></td>
<td>110</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High level (88-132)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict properties</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat to self</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-blame</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low level (10-25)</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High level (26-40)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>306</td>
<td>81.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: M= mean; S.D = Standard deviation; Min= Minimum; Max = Maximum.

Results of Table 2, indicated that there was a negative significant correlation relationship between respondents’ perception of inter-parental conflicts and their self-efficacy (r=-.22, p<.01). Even though the strength of correlation was weak, the result indicated that parents with high parental conflict, had adolescents’ children with lower self-efficacy. Low relationship of CPIC scale with self-efficacy may be due to low inter-parental conflicts reported by respondents. Of the subscales of CPIC, threat to self perception during inter-parental conflict had highest negative relationship with self-efficacy, followed by conflict properties and self blame. Respondents who reported more inter-parental conflict within the home had indicated lower attachment quality with both mother and father.

Table 2. Relationship between inter-parental conflicts with adolescents’ self-efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>r value</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Perception of Inter-parental conflict</td>
<td>-.223**</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict properties</td>
<td>-.208**</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat to self</td>
<td>-.228**</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-blame</td>
<td>-.112*</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01 (one-tailed)

Table 3, shows the result of hierarchical regression analyses for students’ self-efficacy. In first step, five background variables (fathers’ age, mothers’ age, birth order and mothers' education and fathers' job of respondents) were entered into the regression model. At first step, the selected background variables explained only 3% of the variance in respondents’ self-efficacy. At this step, mothers; education and fathers’ job were significant predictors of respondents’ self-efficacy. F (5, 368) = 2.427, p=0.035, indicate the regression model was significantly fit the data.

At step 2, three subscales of inter-parental conflict were added into the regression model. At step 2, F (8, 365) =4.292, p<0.001, indicating the regression model was significantly fit the data. The R²change at step 2 equals to 0.054 meaning that inter-parental conflict variables add 5% of variances in self-efficacy (p<0.001) over and beyond the variables in the first step. At step 2, threat to self (Beta=-.162, p<0.05) was the strongest predictor of student self efficacy followed by mothers’ education (Beta=.124, p<0.001) and fathers’ job (Beta=.109, p<0.05).

Table 3 depicted the final model (step 2) coefficients for constant (b0 = 37.319, p<0.05). Mother’s education level (b1 = 1.087, p<0.05), father’s job (b2 = .928, p<0.05), threat to self (b3 = -.143, p<0.05) were significant. Therefore, the estimated equation for the linear model of prediction of respondents’ self-efficacy was:

\[ Y = b_0 + b_1 (x_1) + b_2 (x_2) + b_3 (x_3) + e \]

where:

- \( Y \) = Self-efficacy
- \( b_0 \) = Constant
- \( b_1, b_2, b_3 \) = Regression coefficients
- \( x_1, x_2, x_3 \) = Variables
- \( e \) = Error term
\( X_1 = \) Respondents' mother education level (tertiary)

\( X_2 = \) Father's job (self-employed)

\( X_3 = \) Threat to self

\( e = \) Error

Table 3: Results of multiple regression analysis for predicting respondents’ self-efficacy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Multiple Regression Analysis Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents and Individual Variables</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father’s age</td>
<td>33.911*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth order</td>
<td>- .062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s education</td>
<td>.317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father’s job</td>
<td>.851*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.957*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inter-parental conflict  
Conflicts properties: -.067 .039 -.118
Threat to self: -.143* .062 -.162*
Self-blame: -.034 .052 -.039

Note: *p<0.05
Step 1: F (5, 368) = 2.427, R² = .032, Adjusted R² = .019, p<0.05
Step 2: F (8, 365) = 4.292, R² = .086, Adjusted R² = .054, F-change (3, 365) = 7.195, p<0.001

In the equation, the positive values show that there is a positive relationship between the variable and the outcome. It shows as mother's tertiary education and father's self-employed job increase the respondents’ self-efficacy will increase. For example, one unit increase in the mother tertiary education (x1) will increase 1.087 unit increase in the respondents’ self-efficacy (Y). However, the negative value shows a negative relationship between threat to self and self-efficacy. That mean is if inter-parental conflict increases the respondents' self-efficacy will decreases.

4. Discussion

The findings concur with previous researches, which indicate that observing aggressive interactions between parents may result in feeling less secure in the parental relationship in childhood (Cummings & Davies, 1994) and late adolescence (Amato & Sobolewski, 2001; Riggio, 2004). It is also suggested that during childhood conflict between parents has continuing unpleasant effects on one's social performance (Booth and Edwards, 1990; Dadds et al., 1999; Martin, 1990). This unpleasant effect on one's social skills has been found to transmit to one's subsequent self-efficacy (Harter & Whitesell, 1996; Kolb, 2011).

Inter-parental conflict can influence adolescent’s behaviour both indirectly, through changes in the parent-adolescent relationship and directly, through modelling and exposure to stress. When conflicts are resolved constructively and successfully, parents may help children in their relationships with others by show them effective skills and been models for problem resolution, which allowing children to generalize these conflict-resolution styles to future peer relationships. These skills will carry on with them through life span (Cui et al., 2005; Diamond & Muller, 2004; Platt et al., 2008; Pryor & Pattison, 2007).

Thus, it is important for parents and educators to know the role of self-efficacy in adolescents’ academic performance. Moreover, this results implied that self-efficacy among late adolescents can be improved through positive parents relationships and parent-adolescents relationships. Thus, it is suggested that parents prepared with appropriate knowledge and skills for their adolescent’s needs and development.
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References


