



Relationship between Perceived Inter-parental Conflict, Emotional Intelligence and Self-esteem of Young adults

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Abstract

The study aimed at assessing the effect of perceived inter-parental conflict and emotional intelligence on self-esteem among young adults. A sample of 107 participated in the study designed as a Single group Correlational Study. Convenient Sampling method was used to collect samples. Children's Perception of Inter-parental conflict scale (Fincham, 2013; Validated to be used among young adults), Emotional Intelligence Inventory (Immanuel and Sushma, 2003), Self-Esteem Inventory (Immanuel and Sanaindaraj, 1990) were used to collect data, which was then subjected to Pearson Correlation and Regression Analysis using SPSS. The study result indicated that Perceived Inter-parental Conflict and Emotional Intelligence were significantly correlated with Self-esteem ($p < .01$). Further, they conjointly predicted 36% of variance in Self-esteem among young adults.

Key words: Perceived Inter-parental Conflict, Emotional Intelligence, Self-esteem

India is projected to be the youngest country in the world by 2020 with 64% of its population in the working age group with an expected median age to be 29 (State of Urban Youth, India Report, 2012). This demographic

potential, if rightly channeled can increase the GDP growth rate by 2%. Greater Participation in Nation building awaits Indian youth. Nonetheless, only a group which is physically and mentally healthy can accrue these opportunities and turn them into positive life experiences. Optimum mental health is essential for the young adults to navigate their complex developmental tasks in the cognitive, interpersonal and personal domains. Multitudes of factors determine mental health of which Self-esteem has a significant promotive effect on mental health (Mann et al.,2004).

Rosenberg (1965), the pioneer in Self-esteem research conceptualized it as an individual's overall positive evaluation of the self. Self-esteem is an vital facet of mental health with positive or high Self-esteem determining emotional well-being, goal directed behaviour, self-regulation, life-satisfaction, resilience and hope (Abdel-Khalek, 2016). Self-esteem is significantly related to achievement motivation, affects stress perception, influences adaptability to career and satisfaction at job and determines social skills (Cai, et al., (2015) Riggio, Throckmorton & DePaola,1990; Abel M.H.,1996; Orth et al., (2012)).

The ill-effects of low Self-esteem has been studied extensively with low Self-esteem found resulting in inferiority, dissatisfaction and unhappiness from life, emotional instability, aggression, decreased level of wellbeing , decreased ability to handle difficulties and a vulnerability towards a host of psychiatric disorders (Abdel-Khalek, 2016).The relationship between level of self-esteem and Depression, Eating Disorders, Anxiety, Substance Use and Other Addictive Behaviours have been well recognized (Alavi, (2011); Andreassen, et al., (2017); Manna et al., (2016); Fremder (2009); Zeigler-Hill, (2011)).

A variety of familial, personality, neural, socio-cultural and developmental factors have been identified to correlate with Self-esteem. Among the familial factors are Parental nurturance, childhood parental bonding, family affluence and quality of Close relationships (Buri et al., 1987; Passmore et al., 2005; Brown et al.1990; Veselska, 2009). While the personality factor, extraversion showed a positive association with Self-esteem, neuroticism showed a negative association (Amirazodi & Amirazodi, 2011; Kenneth, 2014). Recently, there has been a lot of emphasis on neurological correlates of Self-esteem. Precuneus, a part of superior parietal lobule, Ventro-medial Prefrontal Cortex, anterior cingulate and bilateral hippocampus are some of the

structures, whose functioning is associated with level of Self-esteem. (Bradley et al.,2016; Kawamichi et al., (2018)).

Numerous socio-cultural factors were found to play a role in the level of Self-esteem. One of them is gender with males reporting higher Self-esteem than females during the major part of life. Occupational status also had a significantly positive correlation with Self-esteem .Further, migration status and inadequate group identification negatively correlated with Self-esteem (Mao Z-H & Xudong Z, 2012 ; Verkuyten, M. 2009). Developmentally, it has been established that Self-esteem was relatively high in childhood, takes a dip in adolescence, rises across adulthood and declines in old age. (Orth & Robins, 2014; Robins & Trzesniewski et al., 2003; Wagner et al., 2013).

Given the importance of self-esteem in moulding life experiences, it is appropriate to study the correlates of Self-esteem in various age groups to identify means of improving Self-esteem and thereby the quality of life experiences. As the period between adolescence and middle adulthood is when Self-esteem increases to the highest, young adulthood, a developmental stage which is at the centre of that period was chosen for the study. Among the familial factors which affects self-esteem, one which is ill-represented is perceived inter-parental conflict, especially in case of young adults. Perceived inter-parental conflict refers to the verbal or physical conflict between parents as perceived by the children. (Westrupp, Rose, Nicholson, and Brown (2015). The current study focuses on Inter-parental conflict as perceived by young adults. According to the Cognitive-Contextual model suggested by Grych & Fincham (1990), the impact of marital conflict on a child depends on the child's understanding of the conflict. An individual's perception of Inter-parental Conflict affects his mental health, emotional health, social functioning, relationships and behaviour as noted by Yosuf et al.,(2016). It has been observed that Perceived Inter-parental conflict predicted cognitive emotional regulation and aggression, and maintained ruminations of the conflict (Butt et al., (2014); Elemary et al., (2016); Shahinuzzaman et al., (2016)). Perceived inter-parental conflict predicted psychological distress and internalizing symptoms in children (Howarth (2008); Chaudhry, (2018)). It was also found to significantly influence social competence, and self-discipline (Azam and Hanif (2011); Yosuf et al., (2016)). Perceived Inter-parental conflict was found to negatively correlate with Self-esteem among young children and

adolescents in multiple studies (Pawlak & Klein, 1997; Clements et al., 2014). However, very few studies have exclusively concentrated on young adults (Nazir et al., (n.d)). Studies highlighting the predictive relationship of self-esteem is still rarer.

Another factor of importance associated with self-esteem is emotional intelligence. Mayer & Salovey (2000) conceptualizes Emotional Intelligence as the set of abilities which underlie individual differences in reporting emotions. He suggests that the higher the abilities, the better an individual will be in understanding emotions and problem solving. Emotional Intelligence affects mental health, personality traits, performance and relationships. It is positively correlated with academic and job performance (Naeem et al., (2014); Clark P.R, (2004)). Components of Emotional Intelligence were found have a positive impact on inter-personal relationships and with the stability and happiness in marriage ((Fitness, (2001); Ji & Yoo, (2013)). Emotional Intelligence contributed to psychological wellbeing and is a predictor of resilience from stress and negative life events (Armstrong et al., 2011; Schneider et al., 2013; Shin & Park, 2013). Positive relationship exists between emotional intelligence and optimism (Kumcagiz et al., 2011). Significant and positive correlation have been found between self-esteem and emotional intelligence (Babu, 2008; Abbas & Junaid, 2011; Shamsaei et al. 2016). However, there have not been many studies which establish the predictive relationship between the two variables.

Considering the dearth of studies of observing Self-esteem through the lens of Inter-parental Conflict and Emotional Intelligence among Young adults, the researcher has considered exploring the subject.

Method

A correlational study was undertaken among 107 samples between the age group of 18 to 25 yrs. The convenient sample, was selected from Amity University, Noida and from among residents of Jasola, New Delhi. Following information about background characteristics, data for the study was collected using validated structured questionnaires including Children's Perception of Inter-parental Conflict (CPIC), Self-esteem and Emotional Intelligence Inventories (SEI & EII). SPSS version 24 was used for data analysis.

Pearson correlation and linear regression was used to determine relationship between Self-esteem, Inter-parental Conflict and Emotional Intelligence.

Children's Perception of Inter-parental conflict scale (CPIC) (Fincham, 2013)

CPIC is a 48 item, 3 point likert scale to assess the perception of inter-parental conflict among children. The respondents chose among the options 'true', 'somewhat true' and 'false' considering their inter-parental conflict behaviour. Each item got a score of 0,1 or 2 based on whether it was a positive item or a negative one. The minimum possible score was 0 and maximum possible score was 96. It was found adequate to assess the perception of young adults as well. Four sub-scales of children's interpretation of conflict includes self-blame, threat, coping efficacy, and perceived stability of the causes of conflicts. Cronbach's alpha of various sub-scales include .90 for the Conflict Properties factor, .83 for Threat, and .78 for Self-Blame and .80 for Stability of causes and internal reliability and test-retest reliability. (Grych, (1992); Bickham and Fiese, (1997)). The researcher received permission from the author for the use of CPIC in the current study. As the scale in itself doesn't provide categorization of full scale scores, an arbitrary categorization of 'high', 'medium' and 'low' was computed after assessing the percentile scores.

Self Esteem Inventory (Thomas and Sanandaraj, 1990)

It is a 20 item five-point scale, including academic, emotional, social and physical domains. The scale is five pointed with options to choose ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. The positively worded items were scored 5,4,3,2, and 1, whereas, the negatively worded items were reverse scored .Split half reliability was found to be .95 and test-retest reliability was found to be .90.Content validity was established. Validity was established empirically with coefficient 0.41 at .01 level. The researcher received permission from the author for using the scale for the current study via e-mail. Though higher scores indicated higher Self-esteem and vice versa, arbitrary categories of high, medium and low were given once percentile scores were computed for the present study.

Emotional Intelligence Inventory (EII) (Thomas and Sushma, 2003)

Emotional Intelligence Inventory (EII) is a 50 item self-reported inventory. The participants were to respond to each item based on their degree of agreement on a five point likert scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. The positively worded items were scored 5,4,3,2, and 1, whereas, the negatively worded items were reverse scored. Scores indicated High, Medium and Low Emotional Intelligence respectively. The minimum score possible was 50 and the maximum score possible was 250. Reliability using Cronbach's alpha for the scale yielded 0.88. The researcher received permission from the author for using EII in the current study via e-mail.

Results

The total number of participants was 107. Their mean age was 21.7 with a standard deviation of 2.266. Among the participants, 55.1% were males and 44.9% were females. 63.6% of the participants hailed from nuclear families, whereas 36.4% hailed from joint families. Majority of the participants i.e., 40.02% were educated till 12th standard. Among the rest, 35.5% were graduates and 24.3% were Post-graduates. While majority of them i.e., 80.4% were Hindus, 7.5% were Christians, 5.6% of them Muslims and .9% each was constituted by Parsi, Jain and Sikh participants. The remaining 3.7% were not affiliated to any of the above religions. On the occupational front, 82.2% of the participants were students and 17.8% were employed.

TABLE 1 Correlation Between Study Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1.PIC	1								
2.SE	-.304**	1							
3.EI	-.346**	.592**	1						
4.EI1	-.331**	.448**	.852**	1					
5.EI2	-0.071	.370**	.534**	.334**	1				
6.EI3	-.291**	.385**	.612**	.327**	-0.02	1			
7.PIC1	.835**	-0.166	-.207*	-.231*	-0.039	-0.108	1		
8.PIC2	.778**	-.309**	-.394**	-.317**	-0.169	-.322**	.616**	1	
9.PIC3	.612**	-.285**	-.354**	-.413**	0.013	-.266**	.293**	.442**	1

Abbreviations: PIC- Perceived Inter-parental Conflict; SE-Self Esteem; EI- Emotional Intelligence; EI1- Personal Efficacy; EI2- Interpersonal Efficacy; EI3- Intrapersonal Efficacy; PIC1- Conflict Properties; PIC2- Threat; PIC3-Self-Blame.

*p < .05 ; **p < .01

To assess the relationship between Perceived Inter-parental conflict, Emotional intelligence and Self-esteem, Pearson Correlation was administered. Aiming a detailed analysis of the variables, the subscales of Perceived Inter-parental conflict, viz, conflict properties, threat, and self blame as well as the subscales of Emotional Intelligence , viz, , Personal Efficacy, Inter-personal Efficacy and Intra-personal Efficacy were also computed . As presented in Table 1, a significant negative correlation was found between Self-esteem and Perceived Inter-parental Conflict (r = -.304) as well as between Self-esteem and Threat(r = -.309) and Self-blame (r = -.285). A negative correlation, though not statistically significant was observed between Self-esteem and Conflict

Properties($r = -.166$). Significant positive correlation was observed between Self Esteem and Emotional intelligence($r = .592$) and between self-esteem and Personal Efficacy($r = .448$), Inter-personal Efficacy($r = .370$), and Intrapersonal Efficacy($r = .385$).

TABLE 2. Linear Regression Analysis for variables contributing to Self-Esteem

	B	SE	b	p
PIC	-.08	.059	-.113	.180
EI	.373	.056	.552	.000
R ²				.361*
F for R ²				29.389

Abbreviations: PIC – Perceived Inter-parental Conflict; EI- Emotional Intelligence; R²- R squared; B- Unstandardised B; b- Standardised beta.

Regression Analysis was done to assess the predictability of Perceived Inter-parental Conflict and Emotional Intelligence. Following the analysis, it was found that Perceived Inter-parental Conflict and Emotional Intelligence significantly predicted Self-esteem as depicted in Table 2. It could be inferred that both the variables conjointly accounted for 36% of Self-esteem.

Discussion

The current study aimed to assess whether Perceived Inter-parental conflict of young adults, an important subjective factor rooted in their familial context and their Emotional Intelligence, an ability which helps an individual, to adapt to the emotional dimension of situations predicts how they evaluate themselves, i.e., their Self-esteem. The study identified a predictive effect of Perceived Inter-parental Conflict and Emotional Intelligence on Self –esteem among Young adults.

Self-esteem is the evaluation that a person makes about oneself. It is an important determinant of the emotional, psychological and social wellbeing of an individual (Abdel-Khalek, 2016). It is a construct, the development and maintenance of which is influenced by the interplay of familial, socio-cultural, neural and personality factors (Veselska, 2009; Kenneth, 2014; Bradely, 2016; Pan et al., 2016). Perceived Inter-parental Conflict refers to the way in which children understand physical or verbal conflicts between their parents. That marital

conflict can effect adverse consequences in children was long established (Davies & Cummings, 1994). However, it was Grych & Fincham (1990) who suggested the cognitive-contextual model which posits that regardless of the conflict, children's perception of the conflict between their parents determines the consequences. Perceived Inter-parental conflict has since been extensively researched on their emotional, behavioural, relational and developmental impact on individuals. Emotional Intelligence is the ability to perceive, understand and regulate emotions. Emotional Intelligence is found to significantly influence personality traits, mental health, performance, and relationships of individuals (Schneider et al., 2013; Ji & Yoo, 2013).

A sample of 107 young adults between the age of 18 to 25 were selected for the present study. The scales used for the study included Children's Perception of Inter-parental Conflict Scale (CPIC) by Fincham, (2013), Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI) by Immanuel & Sanaindaraj (1990) and Emotional Intelligence Inventory (EII) by Immanuel & Sushama (2003).

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 sub-components of Perceived Inter-parental conflict, viz 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 Inter-parental Conflict in general and as perceived by the children has a significant inverse relationship with Self-esteem of the children (Pawlak & Klein, 1996; Shen, 2009; Clements et al., 2014). Further, significant positive correlation was found between Emotional Intelligence and Self-esteem as well as between the Sub-components of Emotional Intelligence, i.e., Personal Efficacy, Inter-personal Efficacy as well as Intra-personal Efficacy and Self-esteem. Consequently, we could conclude that the higher the Emotional Intelligence of young adults, the higher their Self-esteem would be. The results were in tandem with the previous research which suggested a similar relationship between the two variables (Babu, 2008; Abbas & Junaid, 2011; Shamsaei et al. 2016).

A regression analysis was run to test the predictive effect of Perceived Inter-parental Conflict and Emotional Intelligence on Self-esteem. Both the variables conjointly accounted for 36% of variance in Self-esteem among

young adults. This was an interesting finding because although association was found between the variables in the past, a predictive relationship couldn't be found.

The results have implication to theory and practice. The current study gives an additional dimension, of a conjoint predictive effect of Perceived Inter-parental Conflict and Emotional Intelligence on Self-esteem to their established association, thereby enriching the existing body of knowledge on all the three variables. Training programs to improve Emotional Intelligence can be incorporated to traditional therapeutic methods especially in case of patients with low Self- esteem. Additionally, Couples can be psycho-educated about the long term effects of their conflict on their children's mental health. Further, therapists can be sensitized to work on the possible distorted perceptions about parental conflicts which young adults might have harboured subjecting them to undue distress and low self-esteem.

However, the results of the study should be generalised with caution due to the demographic factors. The participants were primarily from Urban Domicile , especially from middle socio-economic class or higher. The sample size of 107 also limits the generalisability of the results. A bigger sample size, maintaining heterogeneity in the social background could have yielded different results. In addition to that, the self-reported nature of the measure might have influenced the responses due the social desirability effect. Keeping in mind the results and limitations, further research can be done in the area. The study can be replicated with a large and socio-demographically heterogeneous sample. Long term Interventional studies to assess whether improvement in Emotional Intelligence and better management of Marital Conflict translates to an increase in Self-esteem can be taken up.

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