

INVESTIGATING THE MEDIATING ROLE OF EMOTIONAL SAFETY IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHILDHOOD PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL CONFLICTS

INVESTIGANDO O PAPEL MEDIADOR DA SEGURANÇA EMOCIONAL NA RELAÇÃO ENTRE PERCEPÇÕES INFANTIS DE CONFLITOS PARENTAIS

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to investigate the mediating role of children's emotional safety in the family in the relationship between children's perceptions of parental conflict and children's self-esteem in enriching mediating and process-oriented models. For this purpose, 200 elementary fifth grade students (100 girls and 100 boys) who were studying in Tehran during the academic year 2017-2018 were selected using multistage random sampling. And they responded to the child perception questionnaire about conflict between parents, self-esteem, and family safety. Simple and hierarchical regression were used to analyze the data and investigate the direct and intermediate relationships. The results showed that children's perception of parental conflict had an adverse effect on their self-esteem. Also, the child's perception of conflict is directly related to the child's emotional insecurity. In addition, emotional insecurity can reverse the self-esteem of the child. Finally, the mediating role of emotional insecurity in the relationship between conflict perception and self-esteem was confirmed. These findings are consistent with tissue-based cognitive framework hypotheses, emotional safety theory, and protective factors and mediating risk. The results of this study could be useful in enriching process-oriented models that explain the role of mediating risk factors in transmitting parental conflicts to children's behavioral and emotional outputs.

Keywords: Child perception. Parental conflict. Family emotional safety. Mediating risk factors. Self-esteem.

Resumo: O objetivo deste estudo foi investigar o papel mediador da segurança emocional das crianças na família na relação entre as percepções das crianças sobre o conflito dos pais e a auto-estima das crianças, enriquecendo os modelos de mediação e de processo. Para esse fim, 200 alunos do 5º ano do ensino fundamental (100 meninas e 100 meninos) que estudavam em Teerã durante o ano acadêmico 2017-2018 foram selecionados por meio de amostragem aleatória em vários estágios. E responderam ao questionário de percepção da criança sobre conflito entre pais, auto-estima e segurança da família. Regressão simples e hierárquica foi utilizada para analisar os dados e investigar as relações diretas e intermediárias. Os resultados mostraram que a percepção das crianças sobre o conflito dos pais teve um efeito adverso sobre a autoestima. Além disso, a percepção de conflito da criança está diretamente relacionada à insegurança emocional da criança. Ademais, a insegurança emocional pode reverter a auto-estima da criança. Por fim, confirmou-se o papel mediador da insegurança emocional na relação entre percepção de conflito e auto-estima. Esses achados são consistentes com hipóteses da estrutura cognitiva baseada em tecidos, teoria da segurança emocional e fatores de proteção e risco de mediação. Os resultados deste estudo podem ser úteis no enriquecimento de modelos orientados ao processo que explicam o papel da mediação de fatores de risco na transmissão de conflitos parentais aos resultados comportamentais e emocionais das crianças.

Palavras-chave: Percepção infantil. Conflito familiar. Segurança emocional. Fatores de risco mediadores. Autoestima.

Introduction

Emotional-behavioral disorders are relatively common in childhood. Most of these inconsistencies are due to a lack of attention to sensitive childhoods and a lack of proper guidance in the process of development. This neglect results in a lack of adaptation and adaptation to the environment and various disorders in different dimensions for the child (Campbell, 2002).

In Transformational Child Pathology (Lerner, 2005), the framework of transformational systems comprises three main axes: the necessity of studying pathology in relation to normal and abnormal evolutionary processes, the importance of tissue and growth context in the occurrence and outcome of disorders and the interactive role of various events that They are important in the process of normal and abnormal transformation. Also, it should be noted that the framework of transformational systems in the study of child pathology avoids simple linear patterns of causality and focuses more on systemic and evolutionary factors and their interactions.

One of the most important developmental and systemic factors that have been put forward by many researchers is the family and the presence of family-influencing factors in the development of childhood disorders (Mussmann & Coat, 2001; Ouner & Shaver, 2002). Among these, parental interactions are one of the important factors in the family system through which the immediate environment influences children's mental development so that parental conflict can lead to damaging family relationships and parenting behaviors. (Gharabagh and Vafaie, 2010). Researchers have found that children's perceptions of these interactions are far more important than the practical experience of such conflicts (Baldry, 2003). Studies have also supported the mediating role of assessments in relation to parental conflict with children's problems (Gritch, Harold, & Miles, 2003). For this reason, many approaches have conceptualized multiple structures from different perspectives in the field, and a large number of empirical studies have supported many of them.

However, there are still many shortcomings in this area of research, and existing research continue to face many unanswered questions about the family, mechanisms and processes within it. Child psychologists and psychologists attribute many of the child abnormalities to family relationships and parenting practices and emphasize the impact of childhood events and events on the formation of personality in their future lives (Sadr al-Sadat, Shams Esfand Abadi, and Imamipour, 2005). Parents are the first to interact with the child and have the most impactful interactions and shapes in shaping the child's future life structure (Goldberg & Goldberg, 2003). The home environment is the first and foremost factor that influences the development of a person's personality. Researchers have found that children's perceptions of these interactions are far more important than the practical experience of such conflicts (Baldry, 2003). Studies have also supported the mediating role of assessments in relation to parental conflict with children's problems (Gritch, Harold, & Miles, 2003).

The context-based cognitive framework emphasizes the direct transfer of aggressive marital conflict to negative child cognitive representations, including self-intention and expectation of threat (McDonald & Gritch, 2006). According to process-oriented approaches that seek to discover mediating factors in the relationship between parental conflicts with children's emotional, behavioral, and personality outcomes. Understanding the role of the family context plays an important role in the development of children, and conceptual and process-oriented models seek to identify protective and risk mediating factors that investigating the relationship between family conflicts and the development of children's personality disorders and characteristics how all children exposed to parental conflicts do not have behavioral and emotional problems, and how emotional family safety as a mediating protective factor can prevent the negative effects of these conflicts on children's self-esteem.

Most previous research has focused on the mechanisms of children's emotional and behavioral disorders, and less research has focused on the formation of personality variables such as self-esteem in the family context. The results of this study can be used in formulating parenting and parenting educational programs and informing them of the role of quality of parenting relationships and emotional atmosphere of family in shaping children's personality traits. Also, the results of this study help to enrich the intermediate and process-oriented models. The present study seeks to answer the question whether the child's emotional safety in the family can play a mediating role in the relationship between the child's perception of parental conflicts and children's self-esteem.

Research hypotheses

1. Perceptions of parental conflict are inversely related to the child's self-esteem.
2. Perceptions of parental conflict are inversely related to family emotional security.
3. Emotional immunity of the family is directly related to the dignity of the child.
4. Emotional safety of the family is mediated by the relationship between perceptions of parental conflict and self-esteem.

Methodology

The design of this study is descriptive-correlational using intermediate model. The statistical population of this study is all male and female fifth grade students in Tehran in the academic year of 97-96. The sample of this study is 200 fifth-grade students (100 girls and 100 boys). In intermediate models, the mediating and moderating variables for the criterion predictor variable and for the criterion variable have the second predictor role. The sample group was selected by multistage random sampling. The research tool is a questionnaire. Data were analyzed using Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis and the results were analyzed by SPSS 20 software. In this study, descriptive and inferential statistics were used to determine the correlation and direction of the relationship between predictor and criterion variables and through multivariate regression equation, the share of each predictor variable of child perception of parental conflict and family emotional safety, Separately and simultaneously, changes in the criterion variables, namely, the child's self-esteem, were obtained and their significance was evaluated. Also, the relationship between emotional safety variables in the family was once tested as a predictor variable with the variable of self-esteem and once as a mediating variable in the relationship between child perception of conflict and self-esteem. The main purpose was to explain the variance of the criterion variable (self-esteem of the child), and the contribution of each of the predictor variables (cognitive evaluation of the parent to conflict and emotional immunity in the family) in explaining the variance of the criterion was assessed using several regression analyzes.

Also, its hypotheses, namely, the normality of the data distribution based on the Kalmagorov-Smirnov test, were tested and validated before running the regression test. Since the level of significance obtained in KS test in research variables is more than the criterion value of 0.05 (conflict perception 0.99 with significance of 0.29, emotional insecurity with 0.37 significance, self-esteem 1.27 With a significance of 0.098) it can be said that the distribution of variables under study is normal.

Findings

Regression analysis of the first hypothesis: Perceptions of parental conflict are inversely related to child self-esteem.

As the results of Table 4-2 show, there is a significant correlation between the two variables of conflict perception and self-esteem ($r = -0.183$, $p < 0.01$) and these two variables can be entered into the regression equation. To test this hypothesis, standard regression analysis was performed considering parental conflict perception as a predictor variable and child self-esteem as a criterion variable. Table 1 summarizes the information in this regression analysis:

Table 1: Statistical indices and coefficients of variation predicting conflict perception in self-esteem regression

Variable index	Explanatory coefficient R ²	F	Freedom degree	Sig level	B	t	Standard deviation	β
Conflict perception	0.03	6.79	1	0.010	-0.24	-2.6	9.02	-0.18

As can be seen in Table 1, the relationship between conflict perception and self-esteem is significant at $P < 0.05$ and there is an inverse relationship between these two variables, so that the conflict perception can account for 3% of the variance or variance of self-esteem. That is, the lower the perception of a child's conflict is, the lower the self-esteem. This confirms the first hypothesis of this study.

Hypothesis 2: Parent conflict perception inversely correlates with family emotional safety.

As the results of Table 2 show, there is no significant correlation between the two variables of conflict perception and emotional safety, whereas there is a significant correlation between conflict perception and emotional insecurity ($p < 0.161$, $r = 0.05$). Conflict perception variable as predictor variable and emotional insecurity as a criterion variable were entered into regression analysis.

Table 2: Statistical indices and coefficients of variation predicting conflict perception in regression related to emotional insecurity

Variable index	Explanatory coefficient R^2	F	Freedom degree	Sig level	B	t	Standard deviation	β
Conflict perception	0.02	5.24	1	0.023	0.19	2.28	8.40	0.16

As shown in Table 2, the relationship between conflict perception and emotional insecurity is significant at $P < 0.05$ and there is a direct relationship between the two variables, so that the conflict perception can predict 2% of the variance or variance of emotional insecurity. The slower it is, the greater the perception of conflict, the greater the emotional insecurity of the child in the family. The second hypothesis of this study is thus confirmed.

Hypothesis 3: Emotional safety of the family is directly related to the child's self-esteem.

Table 3: Statistical indices and variable coefficients predicting emotional insecurity in self-esteem regression

Variable index	Explanatory coefficient R^2	F	Freedom degree	Sig level	B	t	Standard deviation	β
Conflict perception	0.46	170.29	1	0.001	-0.73	-13.05	6.81	-0.68

As can be seen in Table 3, the relationship between emotional insecurity and self-esteem is significant at $P < 0.01$, so that emotional insecurity can predict 46% of the variance or variance of self-esteem, ie The greater the emotional insecurity of the family, the less self-esteem the child has. The third hypothesis of this study is thus confirmed.

Hypothesis 4: Emotional family safety mediates the relationship between parental conflict perception and child self-esteem.

Table 4: Summary of Statistical Indicators and Significant Results of Regression on Mediating Family Emotional Insecurity Interaction Relationship between Conflict Perception and Child Self-Esteem

Pattern Index	Freedom degree	F	Sig level	Explanatory coefficient R^2	Estimation error
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Regression 1	1	6.79	0.010	0.03	9.02
Regression 2	2	86.18	0.001	0.046	6.70

Predictive variable: Conflict perception

2. Predictive variables: conflict perception, emotional insecurity
 Criterion variable: self-esteem

Table 5: Statistical Indicators and Variables of Conceptions of Conflict Perception in Regression on Child Self-Esteem Mediated by Emotional Insecurity

Index	B coefficient	β	t	Sig level	Estimation error
Conflict perception	-0.24	-0.18	-2.60	0.010	0.09
Conflict perception Emotional insecurity	-0.08	-0.06	-1.25	0.21	0.07
	-0.72	-0.87	-12.65	0.001	0.05

Criterion variable: self-esteem

As the results show, by inserting the mediator variable of emotional insecurity into the relationship between conflict perception and self-esteem, the meaningful relationship between these two variables is completely eliminated, thus mediating the role of emotional insecurity in the relationship between conflict perception and self-esteem. Your self-respect is upheld.

Discussion and conclusion

The present study was conducted to investigate the mediating role of emotional immunity in the relationship between child perceptions of parental conflict and child self-esteem. To this end, the hypotheses were formulated and based on the research objectives; the data were collected and analyzed.

Hypothesis 1: According to the results of regression analysis presented in Table (3), negative conflict perception predicts lower self-esteem. This finding is consistent with the underlying hypotheses of the cognitive-histological framework.

In this model, children's assessments of parental conflict and family functioning play a central role in interpreting child maladaptation (Greisch & Fincham, 1990; McDonald & Greage, 2006; Fusco & Greage, 2007). The cognitive contextual framework assumes that as a contextual factor, the emotional status of the family, and the emotional quality of its interactions and relationships play an important role in children's perceptions of parental conflict. In addition, confirming the first hypothesis of this study is consistent with the results of previous research on the role of conflict perception in internalizing children's problems. Consistent with the results of the present study, Ranjbar et al (2013) showed that all aspects of the family process, including how to make decisions about family issues, how family members interact, cohesion and support of family members, and how to deal with stress and problems, are related to self-esteem. Strog Apple, Davis & Cummings, 2010; Firkhatt, 2012; Rhodes, 2009) showed that exposure of children to marital conflicts has a negative impact on the development of the child, especially emotional development, causing fear and anxiety. In line with these results, Khajei Nouri and Dehghani (2016) also showed that children suffer from emotional and behavioral problems due to the tension of family space and

family relationships, and the more parental conflicts are, the lower the self-esteem of children. Adolescents living in families with high levels of conflict have many emotional and behavioral problems. The negative impact of perceptions of conflict on children's self-esteem is consistent with the findings of Davis and Whitach (2008). Parents' inappropriate relationships lead to inappropriate social behaviors in children and are associated with feelings related to social relationships including self-esteem. And it generally affects how they respond to different social situations. For example, (Gharabaghi et al., 2012) showed that parental conflict can be a negative predictor of altruistic behaviors in children.

Hypothesis 2: According to the results of regression analysis presented in Table 4, the perception of negative conflict predicts greater emotional insecurity in the family. This finding is consistent with the underlying assumptions of the cognitive-tissue framework and the family's emotional safety theory. Emotional safety theory emphasizes the need for the child to maintain a sense of security in the relationship between the child and the family by adopting the principles of family systems theory and attachment. According to the functional emotion perspective, processes of evaluating family bonds, in the face of stressors, involve both cognitive processes and emotional processes (Cummings et al., 2006). Theory of Emotional Safety In addition to accepting the basic hypothesis of attachment theory and emphasizing emotional safety as a need for children in the child-parent relationship, he also considers safety in other family contexts, including the relationship between parents. The basic premise of the theory of emotional safety is that parental conflicts increase children's vulnerability to psychological problems by undermining the child's sense of safety in the family (Davis & Cummings, 1998). According to Emotional Safety Theory, children's adaptation is affected by their sense of security in the family system, and considers the quality of parent-child relationships as a factor affecting children's safety. Emotional immunity of children is affected in many ways by relationships between parents. Children are directly exposed to the effects of parental conflict, and parental conflict indirectly affects parental quality, attachment relationships, and other family contexts that children experience (Cummings & Davis, 2015). Davis et al. (2007) showed that child emotional distress following parental conflicts is manifested as three dimensions of behavioral disorder, involvement in conflict, and negative emotional response.

The present study on the sample of Iranian children with the confirmation of Emotional Safety Theory (Davies & Cummings, 2006) showed that parental conflict avoids parental emotional availability for children and reduces child trust in family as a source of safety. In other words, marital conflict leads to a child's emotional insecurity in the family. Also, the reduction in the child's sense of emotional safety in the family follows the perception of parental conflict, consistent with a holism in family systems theory that considers the family as a set of interconnected systems and emphasizes that conflict in each system of the family Transferred to other systems and the entire family unit. Thus, the present study with the sample of Iranian children confirmed the hypothesis that problems between parents are a threat to the integrity of the whole family. Consistent with this finding, al-Sheikh et al. (2007) found that insecure attachment and emotional insecurity about family functioning and parental relationships were not only associated with child adjustment problems, but also predicted decreases in children's educational attainment and cognitive skills acquisition. Be. Davis and others (2007) also found that marital conflict has a key role in raising children's concerns. Hypothesis 3: According to the results of regression analysis presented in Table (5), a child's emotional insecurity in the family predicts lower self-esteem. This finding is also consistent with the underlying assumptions of the theory of emotional safety and attachment. Emotional safety theory assumes that children's efforts to understand the causes and consequences of violence and aggression among parents have distinct effects on their social, emotional, and emotional functioning (McDonald & Greicher, 2007; Fusco & Greicher, 2007). The basic premise of the theory of emotional safety is that parental conflicts increase children's vulnerability to psychological problems by weakening the child's sense of safety in the family. Maintaining emotional safety can be seen as a need for three classes of responses: (i) the emotional response that is characterized by a severe, prolonged, and parental stress response, or (ii) an attempt to engage in or avoid parental conflict. To mitigate the effect of conflict; and (ii) negative internal representations of parental relationships that are characterized by the child's negative assessment of the consequences of parental problems for their own and family's well-being (Davis & Cummings, 1998). The child may try to intervene to resolve parental

conflicts (triangulation). Consistent with this finding, Grych et al. (2003) showed that children's perceptions of repetition, severity, and resolution of parental conflict consistently predict children's internalization and externalization problems. Measurement of children's internalizing emotional responsiveness and apparent stress in response to parental conflict has also been able to predict children's present and future disagreement (Davis & Cummings, 1998). Research has shown that insecure attachment and emotional insecurity about family functioning and parental relationships are not only associated with child adjustment problems, but also predict the decline in educational attainment and children's cognitive skill acquisition (al-Sheikh et al., 2007).

Hypothesis 4: According to the results of regression analysis presented in Tables 6 and 7, family emotional insecurity can mediate the relationship between perceptions of conflict and self-esteem. Although more positive in the family environment, richer emotional space and behavioral interactions than the healthier the child is, the more self-esteem, self-esteem, self-esteem, and belonging to the home and family in the child become (Kourosh Nia & Latifian, 2007). This is also well illustrated in Kapani and Rao's research (2007). Parental conflicts can lead to a decrease in children's self-esteem as a factor of stress and by reducing the child's emotional safety in the family.

Research suggestions

In future studies, it is suggested that more mediating and moderating variables and more age groups be explored.

Based on the findings of these investigations, regular and planned group counseling sessions can be held under the supervision of experts for families and students.

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