

Relationship between Inter-Parental conflict, Social Support, and Resilience Among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

Young adults' resilience and social support are critical factors influencing their ability to cope with inter-parental conflict. This study investigates the relationships among inter-parental conflict, social support, and resilience in young adults. While previous research has explored the impact of family dynamics on individual well-being, there is a scarcity of studies specifically examining how inter-parental conflict correlates with social support and resilience in this demographic. To address this gap, we employed a quantitative research design, utilizing the Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale (CPIC), the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), and the Resilience Scale for data collection. A sample of 206 young adults aged 18 to 25 was selected through purposive sampling. The results reveal significant relationships among inter-parental conflict, social support, and resilience in young adults. Additionally, significant differences were observed in these variables based on education level and gender. These findings suggest that enhancing social support and resilience may mitigate the adverse effects of inter-parental conflict. Future research should focus on developing intervention strategies to bolster the mental health and well-being of young adults facing such familial challenges.

Keywords: inter-parental conflict, social support, resilience, young adults.

1. INTRODUCTION

Inter-parental conflict, marked by a persistent disagreement, hostility, or emotional disconnection between parents, significantly influences adolescents (Hafsa and colleagues, 2021). Arguments between parents are common, but if left unresolved, can lead to a disorderly home that can be harmful to the overall well-being and emotional well-being of a child (Sophie, 2024). Young people who perceive these reasons tend to have difficulties in managing their emotions, establishing good relationships, and dealing with stress (Yassin, 2021). These reasons will reduce their overall life quality, which can lead to issues such as depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem (Harold and Sellers, 2018).

Social support and resilience are key in enabling young adults to overcome the adversity generated by inter-parental conflict (Aditi Sethi, 2024). Social support acts as an external buffer for coping with the strain that is exerted by family conflict on individuals through providing comfort and a sense of belonging (Drageset, 2021). Resilience, however, provides individuals with coping mechanisms and emotional resilience necessary to withstand and flourish in the midst of adverse situations (Youssef Jouali, 2024). This is a reflective question, and it forms the basis for our inquiry: How do social support and resilience influence the mental health of adolescents in coping with parental conflict? The research examines the larger effects on interpersonal relationships, emotional adjustment, and development beyond the direct effect of family bonds (Yang et al., 2022).

Inter-Parental Conflict

Interparental conflict is one of the leading causes of dysfunctional family relationships that not only impacts parent-child relationships but also influences the emotional climate of the family (Davies et al., 2021). Emotional distress and instability due to constant parental conflict can have adverse effects on children's psychological and emotional development (Coe et al., 2017). Children growing up in extremely conflict-prone homes are bound to develop a host of issues of emotional, social, and behavioral types (Laletas & Khasin, 2021). Parental conflict raises emotional and behavioral problems, also significantly affecting children's performance at school (Goel, 2023).

Parental long-term conflict has been linked with instability and stress, prime risk factors for academic underachievement (Deng et al., 2022). Children who know that home is not in its rightful place or is emotionally unsafe struggle to concentrate at school and with their peers, asserts Mphaphuli (2023). Academic achievement can be damaged as a result, and the child can lose motivation to achieve in school or to acquire negative learning habits (Zemp et al., 2016). Academic achievement can be damaged as a result, and the child can lose motivation to achieve in school or to acquire negative learning habits. Interparental conflict contributes significantly to the emotional well-being of children and academic performance as well as emotion regulation (Hameed et al., 2023). Repeatedly exposed to parental conflict, children become more anxious and experience higher depression rates, and such disorders appear in the form of persistent worry, poor self-esteem, and insecurity (Farmakopoulou et al., 2024).

Due to ineffective communication, mistrust, and unsolved conflicts, the high-conflict family children are generally not adequately prepared to develop attachments (Kouros et al., 2024). They are also socially inept and would be even more isolated and have intensified mental problems (Almeida et al., n.d.). In summary, interparental conflict has far-reaching and far-sweeping impacts on children's social, emotional, and academic functioning (Lee & Lee, 2024). Severe or chronic parental conflict will ruin school functioning, cause serious social problems, and interfere with emotional regulation (Meng et al., 2020).

These issues have the potential to risk vulnerable children for irreparable effects that fragment their capacity for the formation of healthy relationships, stress management, and academic and social success (Clarke, 2020). To foster their emotional well-being and health and enhance relationships within families, interparental conflict must be resolved (Morbech et al., 2024).

Social Support

Social support is critical in enhancing resilience, emotion regulation, and psychological well-being in children and also in shielding them from the adverse effects of parents' conflicts (Hosokawa & Katsura, 2024). The children who continue to witness angry fights between their parents can also find it difficult to manage their emotions, which in turn leads to heightened anxiety, aggression, or withdrawal socially (Morin, 2024). The health and social development of children and their ability to develop interpersonal relationships could be affected by extended family conflict. Good social support systems in the community and the family can perhaps overcome such a negative impact (Cherry, 2024). Social support helps children cope with negative family situations by providing them with emotional protection and practical coping strategies (Bauer et al., 2021).

Intimate parent-child relationships can protect the child from negative effects of interparental violence (Duman & Margolin, 2007). Securely attached children to their parents are more likely to avoid internalizing the violence that has been enacted during parent conflicts because they have a secure attachment base of trust and emotional security (Doyle & Cicchetti, 2017). Intimate parent-child relationships matter because secure parent-child relationships help children manage the emotional difficulties produced by interparental conflict (Davies et al., 2018b).

Extensive social support systems outside the family significantly reduce the impact of parent-child conflicts (Jameel et al., 2024). Such emotional and functional support is also provided by friends, wider family members, and social support systems within the community that help promote the stability and feeling of belonging among children (Buzanko, 2023). Joint marital conflict resolution helps children as it provides a good home atmosphere and acts as a model of healthy conflict resolution (Sudland, 2019).

Overall, social support is the most critical in reducing parental conflict developmental risks (Hess, 2022b). Resilience and overall well-being of children are facilitated by secure attachments, good parenting, and robust support networks in the community and at home (Kohlhoff et al., 2022). Children can thrive if negative home environments are reorganized into developmental opportunities by robust support networks (Elsayed, 2024).

Resilience

Resilient children are better able to handle parental conflict, and this enhances their emotional, social, and cognitive development (Mesman et al., 2021a). Resilient children can withstand and survive adversity, retain emotional stability, and develop normally (Sisto et al., 2019a). Resilient children can resist the psychological and emotional distress resulting from parental conflict (Z et al., 2024). Resilient children make use of internal and external resources to overcome the negative impact of conflict (Masten, 2024). Resilience is influenced by various factors like family relationships, support systems in the environment, and temperament (Sisto et al., 2019b). Resilient children are more self-aware and self-regulating and thus have the capacity to control their emotions (Mesman et al., 2021a).

Good emotional regulation skill increases a child's likelihood of enjoying healthy relationships and decreases the likelihood that they would learn stress from parental conflict (Davies et al., 2016).

Children have been found to be better able to regulate their emotions with the presence of continuous emotional support from their parents, and supportive environments were determined to be at the center of resilience (Caiozzo et al., 2024). Secure attachment and close family ties bring emotional security and stability to children, and this boosts resilience (Buzanko, 2024). Positive caregiver-child relationships improve trust, self-worth, and emotional resilience (Martín Quintana et al., 2023). Children can manage parental conflict when they feel valued and supported (Cheung & Chung, 2022). Through the establishment of safety and acceptance and resilience, secure attachment shields children from the negative impacts of violence (Houston & Grych, 2016). Although resilience is a protective factor against the negative impact of interparental conflict, it should be noted that it does not emerge by itself (Barnová et al., 2019).

These protective factors include safe home environments, good parenting, and supportive resources (Broll et al., 2025). Children are encouraged to become resilient when they observe parents resolve conflicts in a healthy way because it enables them to acquire effective communication and problem-solving skills (García-Ruiz et al., 2013). Children exposed to adversity like domestic violence or mental illness in the family will have fewer behavior problems if they are resilient (Hildebrand et al., 2019). Resilience helps children overcome interparental conflict and flourish in the face of adversity through emotion regulation, secure attachment, cognitive flexibility, and protective networks (Cheraghian et al., 2023). Resilience development is needed in treating developmental problems because of family conflict (Walsh, 2024).

Although many studies have looked at how interparental conflict affects young adults, few have examined how social support and resilience might help reduce the negative impact of that conflict. Most existing research focuses on mental health outcomes like stress or depression, but does not explore how resilience and support systems work together in this context. Also, there is limited research that looks at differences between men and women in how they experience and cope with interparental conflict. This study aims to fill these gaps by exploring the relationships between interparental conflict, social support, and resilience among young adults, while also considering gender differences. The hypotheses of this study are: i) There is no inter-parental conflict, social support, and resilience ii) There is no significant influence of resilience and social support on inter-parental conflict iii) There is no significant difference on inter-parental conflict, social support, and resilience based on gender.

2. METHODS AND MATERIAL

Research Design and Participants

The research utilized a quantitative research design, specifically a correlational design. A Sample of 206 participants was purposively selected from different colleges in Kerala. In this study, the mean score of the participants' age was 21.8 ($SD = 2.52$) years. The study sample's frequency and percentage distribution based on gender and age are presented in Table 1.

Table 1***Demographic variables of the study***

Variable		F	%
Gender	Male	151	73.3
	Female	55	26.7
Education	Undergraduate	91	44.2
	Graduate	115	55.8

Note: N=206

Measures

Demographic Forms. Adolescents completed a questionnaire about their demographics (e.g., sex, age)

The Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale (CPIC): The CPIC is a 48-item instrument designed to assess children's perceptions of interparental conflict across various dimensions, including conflict properties, threats, and self-blame. Each item is rated on a 3-point scale: True, Sort of True, or False. The CPIC has demonstrated strong reliability, with internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) of 0.90 for conflict properties, 0.83 for threat, and 0.78 for self-blame. Test-retest reliability over two weeks yielded coefficients of 0.70 for conflict properties, 0.68 for threat, and 0.76 for self-blame. The scale's validity is supported by significant correlations with parent reports of marital conflict and associations with children's reports of their reactions to specific episodes of conflict.

The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS): A 12-item instrument developed by Zimet et al. in 1988 to assess perceived social support from three sources: family, friends, and significant others. Each source is evaluated through four items, rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "Very Strongly Disagree" to "Very Strongly Agree." The MSPSS has demonstrated strong internal reliability, with a coefficient alpha of 0.88, and robust construct validity, correlating well with mental health measures. Its brevity and solid psychometric properties make it a widely used tool in psychological research.

Resilience Scale: The Resilience Scale, created by Dr. Vijaya Lakshmi and Dr. Shruti Narain, consists of 30 items to evaluate a person's resilience in four areas: perseverance, composure, self-reliance, and faith. Each item is evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale, which ranges from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree.' The scale shows robust psychometric properties, with a test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.87 and a split-half reliability of 0.84, both significant at the 0.01 level. The concurrent validity, when compared to the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), is 0.86, reflecting a high level of validity.

Procedure

Adolescents aged 18 to 25 years were selected for inclusion. Information was gathered through a Google form divided into four sections that included (a) informed consent, (b) demographic data, (c) the Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale (CPIC), (d) the **Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)**, and (e) Resilience Scale. This Google Form was sent to each class's WhatsApp group under the teachers' supervision. All participants were asked to complete the questionnaire without

omitting any items. The data collected was double-checked for accuracy when assembled in the proper format for data analysis.

Data Analysis

Pearson's correlation coefficients were calculated to explore the connections between inter-parental conflict, social support, and resilience. To investigate differences in inter-parental conflict, social support, and resilience among demographic variables, an independent sample t-test was employed. All data were analysed using SPSS version 25.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2

Correlation between inter-parental conflict, social support, and resilience.

Variable	1	2	3	Mean	SD
Interparental conflict	1			17.93	8.93
Social support	-.285**	1		53.22	17.00
Resilience	.328**	.228**	1	100.73	14.72

Note. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level(2-tailed)

Table 2 presents the correlation analysis between inter-parental conflict, social support, and resilience. The results indicate a significant negative correlation between inter-parental conflict and social support ($r = -0.285$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that higher levels of inter-parental conflict are associated with lower levels of social support. Conversely, there is a significant positive correlation between inter-parental conflict and resilience ($r = 0.328$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher inter-parental conflict is linked to greater resilience. Additionally, social support and resilience exhibit a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.228$, $p < 0.01$), implying that increased social support is associated with higher resilience. All correlation coefficients are below 0.7, indicating moderate to low correlations without multicollinearity.

Table 3

Predictors of Interparental Conflict

Variables	t-value	Beta	Sig.
Social support	-3.352	-.117	.001
Resilience	-4.177	-.168	.001

Note. $p < 0.01$

Table 3 presents the predictors of inter-parental conflict, highlighting the influence of social support and resilience. The results indicate that social support ($t = -3.352$, $\beta = -0.117$, $p < 0.01$) and resilience ($t = -4.177$, $\beta = -0.168$, $p < 0.01$) are both significant predictors of inter-parental conflict. Specifically, higher levels of social support and resilience are associated with lower levels of inter-parental conflict, as indicated by the negative beta coefficients. These findings suggest that enhancing social support and resilience may help mitigate inter-parental conflict.

Table 4

Gender differences of Inter-parental conflict, social support and resilience among young adults.

Variable	Gender	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value
Inter-parental conflict	Male	15.58	8.41	-3.578	.001
	Female	19.83	8.75		
Social support	Male	49.32	15.98	-2.97	.001
	Female	56.30	17.23		
Resilience	Male	101.27	14.21	0.46	.643
	Female	100.31	15.15		

Note: $p < 0.05$

Table 4 presents the gender differences in inter-parental conflict, social support, and resilience among young adults. The results indicate a significant gender difference in inter-parental conflict ($t = -3.578$, $p = .001$), with females ($M = 19.83$, $SD = 8.75$) reporting higher levels of inter-parental conflict compared to males ($M = 15.58$, $SD = 8.41$). A significant difference was also observed in social support ($t = -2.97$, $p = .003$), where females ($M = 56.3$, $SD = 17.23$) reported higher levels than males ($M = 49.32$, $SD = 15.98$). In contrast, no significant gender difference was found in resilience ($t = 0.46$, $p = .643$), as males ($M = 101.27$, $SD = 14.21$) and females ($M = 100.31$, $SD = 15.15$) reported comparable levels.

Discussion

The study explores the complex relationships between inter-parental conflict, social support, and resilience in young adults, with particular attention to variations across gender and educational backgrounds. The findings reveal significant associations among the variables and highlight noteworthy gender-based differences, offering deeper insights into family dynamics and individual coping strategies.

A clear inverse relationship was observed between inter-parental conflict and social support, suggesting that individuals who experience higher levels of conflict between parents tend to report lower levels of support from others. This supports theoretical perspectives such as the Family Stress Model, which proposes that familial stress can undermine supportive relationships and reduce access to emotional and practical assistance (Chen et al., 2023).

Interestingly, a positive association was found between inter-parental conflict and resilience, indicating that individuals exposed to greater family conflict may develop stronger coping mechanisms. While initially counterintuitive, this finding suggests that navigating challenging environments can foster adaptive strengths, enabling individuals to build psychological resilience over time (Masten, 2014; Werner, 2012).

Social support was also positively linked with resilience, implying that supportive relationships play an essential role in enhancing emotional strength and adaptive functioning. Existing literature highlights the importance of social networks in helping individuals cope with stress and maintain psychological well-

being, reinforcing the significance of support systems in resilience-building (Barwal & Cherian, 2024; Ozbay et al., 2007).

Further analysis showed that both social support and resilience were meaningful contributors in explaining variations in inter-parental conflict, where higher levels of support and resilience were associated with lower reported conflict. These findings suggest that fostering emotional resources and strong social connections can serve as protective factors in managing the impact of familial tensions (Cicchetti & Rogosch, 2002; Luthar et al., 2015).

Gender-based differences emerged, with females reporting higher levels of inter-parental conflict and greater perceived social support compared to males. These findings align with previous research suggesting that females are more likely to experience and report emotional intensity in family relationships and may also rely more heavily on social connections for coping (Parkash, 2016). No notable gender difference was observed in resilience, supporting the notion that resilience is shaped more by individual experiences and personality traits than by gender alone (Lee et al., 2021; Rutter, 2006).

In summary, the study highlights the nuanced interplay between family conflict, social resources, and psychological resilience in young adults. These findings underscore the importance of supportive environments in mitigating the effects of familial stress and enhancing coping capacities, while also emphasizing the value of gender-sensitive approaches in developing effective mental health interventions.

Implications, Limitations, and Future Directions

The study underscores the intricate relationships among inter-parental conflict, social support, and resilience in young adults. While increased parental disputes are associated with diminished social support, they also appear to foster greater resilience, suggesting that adversity may, in certain contexts, enhance coping mechanisms. This duality highlights the importance of developing programs that not only address family strife but also strengthen support networks to bolster individual resilience. Notably, gender differences emerged, with females reporting higher levels of both inter-parental conflict and social support compared to males. This finding indicates that gender-specific factors should be considered when designing support interventions, as females may be more attuned to relational dynamics and more likely to seek out social support.

The cross-sectional design of the study limits the ability to establish causal relationships among inter-parental conflict, social support, and resilience. Since data were collected at a single point in time, it's challenging to determine the directionality of these associations. Additionally, reliance on self-reported data introduces potential biases, such as social desirability bias, where participants may respond in a manner they perceive as favourable rather than truthful. The limited demographic diversity within the sample further restricts the generalizability of the findings to broader populations.

To build upon these findings, future research should employ longitudinal designs to better understand the temporal relationships among inter-parental conflict, social support, and resilience. Exploring the mechanisms underlying the positive association between inter-parental conflict and resilience could provide insights into effective coping strategies and the role of support systems. Investigating how cultural values

and socioeconomic factors influence these dynamics would enhance the cultural relevance and applicability of interventions. Moreover, expanding research to include diverse family structures and cultural contexts will ensure that support programs are tailored to meet the needs of various populations, thereby improving their effectiveness.

4. CONCLUSION

The study reveals that higher levels of inter-parental conflict are associated with lower social support among young adults, while increased inter-parental conflict correlates with greater resilience. Additionally, females report higher levels of both inter-parental conflict and social support compared to males, whereas no significant gender differences are observed in resilience levels.

Declarations

Consent to Participate: Each participant in the current study gave their informed consent before voluntary participation. In addition, participants have been briefed on the nature of the study, assured that all data collected would be kept confidential, and that participation was purely voluntary without remunerating.

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