



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Perceived Parental Conflict and Psychological Needs among Children and Adolescents**

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**ABSTRACT**

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between perceived parental conflict and psychological needs among children and adolescents through cross-sectional survey research. Through a simple random sampling technique, a total of 1000 children and adolescents were selected from Gujranwala Punjab, Pakistan. The perceived parental conflict was measured using the Children's Perception of Interpersonal Conflict Scale and psychological needs were measured by Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration Scale-Child Version. Findings indicated a statistically significant negative correlation between perceived parental conflict (intensity, frequency, resolution) and psychological needs (autonomy, relatedness, competence) ( $p \leq .001$ ). The findings of the present study indicated that perceived parental conflict significantly predicted psychological needs among children and adolescents [ $R^2 = .93$ ;  $F(1, 998) = 10215.3$ ,  $p \geq .01$ ]. Results also revealed that no significant differences were found in relation to participants' gender, and family systems results of the present study would be helpful to raise awareness about the critical effects of perceived parental conflict and psychological needs among children among adolescents.

**KEYWORDS** Adolescents, Children, Perceived Parental Conflict, Psychological Needs

**Introduction**

The family is a child's primary organization in which the child learns to think, perceive, explore, and respond to the world. As a child spends the majority of his or her time with family members, particularly parents. A child's psychological and physical fitness is greatly influenced by the parent-child bond. Parents can help their children's development and progress by meeting their basic psychological needs, as well as addressing and sharing their concerns, which helps them develop a constructive perspective (Repetti et al., 2002).

Parents are expected to lay a solid foundation for their children in order to promote a prosperous and fulfilling life. It is critical to establish these foundations early in life, particularly during childhood and adolescence. As a result, strong parental communication was required during these stages of life for healthy personality development. Parents must share their feelings and thoughts with their children, as well as involve them in family matters, which gives them a sense of belonging and achievement. Children's expression of feelings, thoughts, and disagreements with their parent's aids in the development of a stable personality. Along with the role of the parent, the home environment is very important in a child's life. The environment at home influences a child's ability to be well-adjusted, balanced, peaceful, and cooperative, or vice versa (Mash & Dozois, 2003).

A positive and firm relationship between parents fosters a pleasant and safe home environment that provides a sense of community incorporation and emotional safety, allowing teens to engage in effective self-regulation. In contrast, a problematic and unsympathetic parental relationship creates an unhealthy home environment, which has a negative impact on the offspring's physical and psychological health. Inappropriate familial

association, less supportive and negligent parents, poor development, overt domestic clashes, and recurring occurrences of resentment and violence between parents, for example, make children vulnerable to a variety of psychological and physical health complications (Repetti et al., 2002).

Inconsistencies, differences of opinion, and debates on certain domestic issues are normal, but severe and frequent discrepancies and conflicts between parent's result in long-term emotional clashes. These inter-parental rattles have a domineering effect on them and significantly disrupt the lives of their offspring. According to the findings, poor inter-parental behaviors and unresolved parental conflicts cause children to be aggressive, which leads to poor educational performance (Mash & Dozois, 2003).

## **Literature Review**

Different researches conducted in various countries regarding parental conflict and psychological needs among children and adolescents. Mazhar et al. (2021) conducted a study on need satisfaction and mental well-being among working and non-working university students in Pakistan. Results revealed that female working students have high basic need satisfaction and mental well-being than male working students.

Shouket and Dildar (2020) studied to assess life satisfaction action, basic psychological needs, and cognitive emotion regulation strategies among Pakistani orphanages residents through purposive sampling. The findings also demonstrated life satisfaction significantly predicted relatedness satisfaction and autonomy satisfaction. Zaman et al. (2020) assessed inter-parental conflict and aggression among university students. The findings showed a significant positive correlation between perceived interparental conflict and aggression and a predictive role between inter-parental conflicts and aggression. Akram and Batool (2018) conducted a study to measure the effect of parental conflicts on adolescents' personality development in Pakistan. The sample consisted of 400 adolescents who lived with both parents with the age range of 10- 19 years. The findings indicated that the majority of participants who reported high levels of parental conflict in their households had negative effects on their personality development.

Xuan et al. (2018) examined the relationships between parental conflict and their children's externalizing and internalizing behavior problems through parenting stress and child emotionality. Findings indicated that parenting stress partially mediated the association between parental conflict and both children's externalizing and internalizing behavior problems. Roman and Kader (2018) conducted research on the relationship between family conflict, basic psychological needs, and externalizing behavior of preadolescents. Results demonstrated that significant positive relationship between family conflict, antisocial behavior, and certain aspects of aggression. Valdés et al. (2018) found the effects of the presence of challenging behavior problems, parental conflict and violence in the community were determined by the probability of the occurrence of bullying behaviors in elementary students. Results indicated that the variables studied manifest significant differences between the student groups with and without aggressive behavior toward peers.

## **Material and Methods**

The current study used simple random sampling technique to select a sample from the target population. The sample of the present study comprised of total 1000 children and adolescents from private and government schools of Gujranwala. Students (boys & girls) whose age range (9-11 years) children and (12-14 years) adolescents were included in the present study. The measures of the present research consist of the demographics form, the Children's Perception of Interpersonal Conflict Scale (CPICS; Grych et al., 1992). and Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration Scale-Child Version (BPNSFS; Van der Kaap-Deeder et al., 2015). *Demographic form:* The demographic form comprised of the demographic variables including gender, age of participants, school name, grade of class,

birth order, number of siblings, family income, residential area, family system, mother education, mother occupation, father education, father occupation. *Children's Perception of Interpersonal Conflict Scale (CPICS; Grych et al., 1992)*. The CPIC consists of 19 items designed to assess three subscales of conflict properties (frequency, intensity, resolution). Response format of CPIC based on 3- point Likert scale (1= true; 2= sort of true; and 3= false). These items were reverse coded 1, 2, 13, 20, 27, 28, 36, 39 according to this format 2= false, 1=sort of true; and 0=true. The CPIC has demonstrated high Cronbach's alpha reliability .90 (Grych et al., 1992). *Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration Scale-Child Version (BPNSFS; Van der Kaap-Deeder et al., 2015)*. The BPNSFS used to measure the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. There are three subscales (competence satisfaction, autonomy satisfaction, relatedness satisfaction). It consists of 12 need satisfaction items (4 items per need) for each basic psychological need. It is a 5-point rating scale, range from completely not true = 1 to completely true = 5. The BPNSFS had demonstrated high Cronbach's alpha reliability .81 to .86 (Liga et al., 2018).

First of all, permission from the higher authorities of schools was taken. Informed consent was taken from participants and only willing participants were included. Brief instructions to fill out the questionnaires were given to the participants and they were asked if they have any ambiguity. They were instructed to cautiously read the directions of each scale respectively and rate the statements honestly. Then the scales were administered to the participants. The questionnaires were completed in an average of 15-20 minutes by participants. The participants were acknowledged at the end for their collaboration and involvement in the study. The findings were obtained by following statistical analysis.

## Results and Discussion

Data were entered into 21 versions of the statistical package for social sciences in order to meet the research objectives and evaluate the research hypotheses. The frequencies and percentages of demographic variables among the participants were assessed using descriptive statistics. To meet the study's objectives and test the hypotheses, inferential statistics such as the independent t-test, correlation, and regression were used.

**Table 1**  
**Correlation Between Correlation Between Perceived Parental Conflict (Frequency, Intensity, Resolution) and Psychological Needs (Autonomy, Relatedness, Competence) Among Children and Adolescents (N=1000)**

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Frequency	-	-	-	-
2. Intensity	.848**	-	-	-
3. Resolution	.801**	.821**	-	-
4. Autonomy	-.765**	-.754**	-.785**	-
5. Relatedness	-.785**	-.773**	-.787**	.881**
6. Competence	-.774**	-.781**	-.756**	.858**

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 1 indicates a statistically significant positive correlation with frequency, intensity, and resolution ( $p < .001$ ) and also a statistically significant negative relationship with autonomy, relatedness, and competence ( $p < .001$ ).

**Table 2**  
**Linear Regression for Perceived Parental Conflict and Psychological Needs among Children and Adolescents (N=1000)**

Variable	B	$\beta$	SE
Constant	42.01***		.222
Perceived Parental Conflict	-.642***	-.967	.005
$R^2$	.936		

\*\*\* $p < .001$ . Table 2 indicated that perceived parental conflict is a significant negative predictor of psychological needs among children and adolescents.

**Table 3**  
**Differences in Mean Scores of Perceived Parental Conflict and Psychological Needs on Basis of Age (N=1000)**

Variables	Mean Rank		<i>U</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>
	9-11 years	12-14 years			
Perceived-Parental Conflict	513.08	489.34	118637.5	-1.29	$\geq .05$
Psychological Needs	517.87	485.10	116387.5	-1.79	

Table 3 revealed that there is no difference found in the mean scores of perceived parental conflict and psychological needs in relation to participants' gender.

**Table 4**  
**Gender Differences in Mean Scores of Perceived Parental Conflict and Psychological Needs (N=1000)**

Variables	Mean Rank		<i>U</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>
	Male	Female			
Perceived-Parental Conflict	501.90	499.10	1243.0	-.154	$\geq .05$
Psychological Needs	515.48	485.53	1151.0	-1.64	

Table 4.7 indicates that there is no difference found in the mean scores of perceived parental conflict and psychological needs in relation to participants' gender.

**Table 5**  
**Differences in Mean Scores of Perceived Parental Conflict and Psychological on the basis of Family System (N=1000)**

Variables	Mean Rank		<i>U</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>
	Nuclear	Joint			
Perceived-Parental Conflict	499.14	501.61	123137.5	-.135	$\geq .05$
Psychological Needs	495.78	504.36	121625.0	-.470	

Table 5 indicated that there is no difference found in the mean scores of perceived parental conflict and psychological needs in relation to participants' family system.

Parents that have marital conflicts are more likely ignorant of their child's psychological needs and probably adopt negative parenting attitudes such as inconsistent discipline, which might have led to negative feelings and behaviors in children. Children and adolescents who frequently expose to parental conflict have become worsen impact on their basic psychological needs. The study was designed to examine the relationship in perceived parental conflict (frequency, intensity & resolution) and psychological needs (autonomy, relatedness & competence) among children and adolescents. The study indicated a statistically significant negative relationship between perceived parental conflict (frequency, intensity & resolution) and psychological needs (autonomy, relatedness & competence) among children and adolescents. Findings of the current study are supported by Kader and Roman (2018) who reported that family conflict impact psychological needs and externalizing behavior among preadolescents. Results of the current study are also in line with the study by Ryan and Deci (2020) indicated that three basic psychological needs (competence, relatedness, autonomy) have clear the way to achieve effectiveness, connectedness, and coherence throughout the life but the family environment or parental conflict would create hurdles to fulfillment the individual's satisfaction of needs. Inter-parental conflict has effect the children and adolescent's personalities, mental wellbeing, and need satisfaction. Another study also supported that children obtain a sense of

belonging among their peer group and within their families. However, when families might experience conflict, the child's sense of belonging may not feel as safe (Zaman et al. 2020 & Akram & Batool, 2018). Previous investigations also confirmed the predicted role of perceived parental conflict in the psychological needs among children and adolescents. The findings are consistent with the studies conducted by Zaman et al. (2020) and Hang et al. (2018) who highlighted that family conflict has significant predictor of physical and verbal aggression. Previous studies also showed no difference was found in perceived parental conflict and psychological needs among children and adolescents based upon their age range, gender and participant's family system respectively. Results are also consistent with Mazhar et al. (2021); Shouket and Dildar (2020); Ghaffari et al. (2020); and Nazie et al., (2012) that reported that parental conflicts effect equally the children and adolescent's psychological needs, also that there was no significant difference found in depression, psychological distress, mental wellbeing, autonomy, competence, and relatedness among gender. However, results of no difference in perceived parental conflict and psychological needs among children adolescents on the basis of family structure were never supported with previous studies Lu et al et al. (2020); Grych et al.2013; Grych et al 2004). The difference would be due to different geographical and socio-cultural factors of the participants (e.g. education level, awareness level and economic conditions etc.).

The most important strength of the study is that up to the researcher's knowledge, a study was conducted first time on the relationship between perceived parental conflict and psychological needs among children and adolescents in Gujranwala Punjab, Pakistan. Furthermore, this study provides evidence of research on perceived parental conflict and psychological needs in the context of Pakistani culture.

This study has several limitations. First data were taken from only one city in Punjab, Pakistan, because of this reason findings of the present study could not be generalized to other cities of the country. Secondly, the tools that were used in the current study were not developed in Pakistan, so there would be some cultural and social differences that might

## **Conclusion**

It is concluded that children and adolescents who perceived parental conflict have also experienced negative consequences on their basic psychological needs. Parental conflict is not regarded as a major problem in developing nations like Pakistan. This is every home's story. Parental conflict should be addressed, and various intervention-related programs should be developed for parents who are more likely to experience increased couple conflict, such as parenting workshops, family counseling and support, psychoeducation, and awareness of families. Preadolescents must be a part of a mentoring program that will enable them to receive essential instruction on how to meet their psychological requirements if their parents do not provide them with this opportunity.

## **Recommendations**

Future research should be designed for different intervention-related programs such as parenting workshops, family counseling, psychoeducation, and awareness about families for those parents who are more likely to experience couple conflict. It is recommended for future studies that the relationship between perceived parental conflict and psychological needs should be examined in other cities of Pakistan with a larger sample. The study also highlighted the need to develop new techniques for managing behavior and fostering a family environment where the basic psychological needs of children can be satisfied.

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