Family Conflicts and Adolescents' Self-Esteem
(The Case of Students of Shiraz)

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Received: 19 September 2014 Accepted: 5 April 2015

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Family environment is a place where our basic sense of “self” is formed through intimate, intense and broad interaction with parents and other family members (Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986). Moreover, emotional relationships between them have a decisive influence on the construction of individual and social identity of each of the children and adolescents. One result of the relationship between parents and children can be found in the phenomenon of children self-esteem. If we consider self-esteem as overall assessment of every individual of “oneself”, this assessment can be formed in the course of interactions that are shaped with those who are regarded as important. One of these important others is family members. Parent’s interaction with each other and with children is of particular importance.

The current article aims to investigate the conflicts between parents, on the one hand, and the conflict between parents and children on the other hand. Since the family is the most important factor in the socialization of the individual (because the maximum emotional load exists in the family) and parents play the most influential role in this area, an analysis of the relationship between parents and their relationships with the children can significantly influence the development of children’s self-esteem.

2. Theoretical Framework

One of the most important conditions for the development of self-esteem of every individual is family and the types of interactions occurring among the members. From the perspective of symbolic interaction, conception that each person has of its “self” is the social result of the evaluations reflected by others and especially important others that are transferred in the course of social interaction (Demo, Stephen, & Savin-Williams, 1987). If a person is lucky enough to be born in a family or culture in which individual traits and characteristics are appreciated, a proper coordination is created between the individual and his environment. Parental involvement is one of the first antecedents of self-esteem that has drawn the researchers’ attention within the recent years (Demo, Stephen, & Savin-Williams, 1987). The involvement of parental support is generally viewed as a positive force. Guüllone argues that paternal support is directly associated with a sense of competence in children. Family relationships are usually strong and durable, and the situation is influential in socialization process and has important
results. Therefore, it could be argued that parent and children’s perception of “self” is significantly influenced by the nature of their mutual relationship. Parents who have conflicts with each other and with their own children, they lack the chance to recognize the constellation of abilities, preferences, merits, fears, interests, etc. in their children at a certain age. This disability makes them unable to develop their children domination. Domination in fulfilling tasks and having successful experiences in childhood is the result of a sense of efficacy and self-esteem. According to White, self-esteem is rooted in the experience of sense of usefulness (White, 1963). Furthermore, social factors and socio-economic status of the family can influence children’s self-esteem.

3. Methodology
   The current study was conducted using a survey method. Data collection was a self-report questionnaire. The study population is composed of female and male students in the academic year 2008-2009 in Shiraz. In the academic year 2008-2009, the total number of male and female students in Shiraz city was 52828 that were divided into four districts (Fars Department of Education, Research & Human Resource Planning Administration, Department of Planning and Programming, 2009). The sample size was calculated using Lin’s formula (Lin, 1978). The of ± 4, confidence coefficient of 95%, and selected sample with reliability coefficient population variance of 50-50% (assuming the highest degree of variance in the population) was composed of 600 subjects, that the main attempt was to distribute the sample size equally between boys and girls. Sampling method was multistage random one.

4. Results and Discussion
   The research results confirm the first three hypotheses, i.e. there is a significant relationship between self-esteem and the respondents’ education level and parent’s education level. Other results showed that there is a direct correlation between conflict between parents and self-esteem in adolescents. When the conflict between parents gets more severe, self-esteem in children would be less. Parent-child conflict at home and outside the home can affect the self-esteem of adolescents. Whatever the extent of parental conflict is raised, their self-esteem would be reduced. According to the results of multivariate regression analysis, five variables including conflict between children and parents, respondent’s education level, marital conflict and social class entered the model. These variables were also associated with the dependent variable in the area of bivariate relationships. Finally, the model was able to explain 24.1% of the variations in the dependent variable.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations
   Family as the most important foundation and actually the primary context for the formation of “self” is of particular importance. Parental relationships with each other and with their children play an important role in the formation of self-esteem. If the conception that one has of himself is based on self-humiliation and low self-esteem, it can adversely affect both the individual and society. As mentioned above, the body of the research carried out in this area show that people with low self-esteem and poor self-image are more likely to have risky behaviors and delinquency. As the results indicate, parents who are in conflict with each other have the children with low self-esteem, and they should provide the necessary facilities for the peaceful settlement of disputes such as counseling centers. On the other hand, because of the sensitivity
of adolescence and lack of knowledge of many parents on how to deal with the problems of children at this age, counseling centers, especially in schools are required to be established to teach parents how to treat with children properly. Of course, this requirement can be fulfilled through transformation of these associations and their adoption of new strategies and solutions.

**Key words:** Family conflict, Self-esteem, Adolescents, Social class.

**Reference (In Persian)**

**Reference (In English)**
