

Parent-Child Conflicts, Punitive Measures and Self Esteem in Eastern Kenya: Implications for Academics

Lazarus Ndiku Makewa
Professor of Educational Communication and Technology,
University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, Kenya
ndikul@gmail.com

Baraka Manjale Ngussa
Lecturers, School of Education, University of Arusha, Tanzania
ngussathe5th@yahoo.com

1. Introduction

Self-esteem is viewed as one of influential factors which can affect student's personal development (Igomu & Muyange, 2013), thus becoming an important variable that can affect the rate of learning. This scenario raised researchers' investigation on correlates of self esteem in academics point of view in different countries. In Nigeria, the study of Denwigwe and Akpama (2013) investigated on Sex Differences in Academic Self –Esteem of Secondary School Students in Abuja Metropolis of Nigeria and yielded no significant difference in academic self-esteem levels between males and females. In Jordan, the study of Alsaraireh (2013) on prediction of emotional intelligence, self esteem and academic achievement in Elementary Schools, self-esteem had a significant prediction, low self-esteem predicting more engagement in bullying activities. This study intended to investigate on Parent-Child Conflicts, Punitive Measures and Self Esteem in among the youths in Kenya, with the purpose to answer the following research questions:

1. What are perceived sources of conflict among youths of Eastern Kenya?
2. Is there significant difference in perception of punitive measures by the youths categorized according to their gender?
3. Is there significant difference in perceived level of self-esteem by the youths categorized according to their gender?
4. Is there significant relationship between perception of punitive measures, self-esteem and sources of conflict among the youths?

2. Literature Review

Although family members spend less time with one another during adolescence, this period has been described as one of increased conflict between parents and their children. Conflict between parents and offspring may be more common during adolescence because youth are negotiating the transition to adult roles and responsibilities (Hill, 1988). In addition to arguing with parents, youths frequently quarrel with their siblings (Buhrmester, 1992; Lempers & Clark-Lempers, 1992). Previous studies have highlighted variation in the frequency of quarreling with different family members: Adolescents report higher rates of conflict with mothers than with either fathers or siblings (Laursen & Collins, 1994; Montemayor & Hanson, 1985; Savin-Williams & Small, 1986; Smith & Forehand, 1986; Steinberg, 1987, 1988). Other studies indicate that Parent-child conflict may result from maturational processes as well as from youth's violations of parental and societal expectations (see review by Laursen & Collins, 2009). Further studies indicate that Parent-child conflict is relevant to family science because it shapes parent-child relationships, parenting practices, family dynamics, and developmental outcomes (Prado et al., 2010; Santisteban, Coatsworth, Briones, Kurtines, & Szapocznik, 2012).

Particularly during adolescence, youth may question social conventions and parental rules, and they may strive toward egalitarian relationships with parents (Wilkinson, R. B., 2012; Youniss, 1987). In addition, cognitive and socio-emotional development provide a more nuanced understanding of social and moral norms (Smetana, 1983). This understanding expands the number of issues youth might consider as falling within their personal domain and outside the realm of parental authority, which creates opportunities for parent-child conflict (Smetana, 1989).

Aside from maturational processes, parents' expectations about their children's attitudes behaviors may contribute to parent-child conflict (Reis, Collins, & Berscheid, 2000), because parental expectations shape practices such as behavioral monitoring and autonomy-granting (Collins & Russell, 1991; Holmbeck, 1996; Morris, Cui, & Steinberg, 2013). Youth's violations of parental expectations may lead to conflict and eventual realignment of the parent-child relationship. In this realignment process, unrealistic parental expectations may become salient sources of parent-child conflict (Collins & Russell, 1991).

Findings are mixed on the specific mechanisms by which parent-child conflict leads to youth problems. Although several studies have found a direct association between parent-child conflict and problems among young and school-aged children (e.g., Ingoldsby et al. 2006), others have noted that the effect of parent-child conflict is consistent but not large (Formoso et al. 2000) and, when considered simultaneously with other family processes such as bonding with parents, the effect may no longer be significant (e.g., Eamon and Mulder 2005; Fleming et al. 2002; Hill et al. 2005). The effect of parent-child conflict may be indirect, that is, mediated by positive parent-child bonding. For example, Hannum and Dvorak (2004) have found that parent-child bonding fully mediates the link between parent-child conflict and problem behaviors. In other words, parent-child conflict reduces the level of secure parent-child bonding, which in turn is related to social and psychological adjustments.

At the same time, studies have shown that parent–child conflict and bonding significantly and independently influence youth behaviors. Specifically, they both influence substance use and deviant behaviors among Mexican American youth (McQueen et al. 2003) and depression and conduct problems among an ethnically diverse sample of youth (Formoso et al. 2000). Constantine (2006) further showed that parent–child conflict had both a direct and indirect effect on youth behaviors, with positive parent–child bonding partially and significantly mediating the effect of perceived conflicts. A clearer understanding of these relationships can help develop specific and effective interventions.

From a developmental perspective, parent–child conflict increases in early adolescence, compared to pre-adolescence, and typically remains high for a couple of years before declining in late adolescence (Laursen, Coy, & Collins, 1998; Paikoff & Brooks-Gunn, 1991; Smetana, 1989). A study of early adolescents' conflicts with parents and siblings reported a rate of two conflicts every 3 days, or 20 per month (Montemayor & Hanson, 1985). In early adolescence, the number of daily conflicts between parents and children increases, and at the same time there is a decrease in the amount of time they spend together and in their reports of emotional closeness (Larson & Richards, 1991).

Developmentally, adolescence brings biological and psychological changes that often lead to differences in beliefs and expectations regarding interpersonal issues between parent (or parents) and child (Collins, 1990); these discrepancies can lead to increased parent–adolescent conflict (Holmbeck, 1996). For many adolescents, the transition from childhood to adolescence includes minor but persistent conflict with parents over details of family life (Sagrestano, McCormick, Paikoff, & Holmbeck, 1999). Research using various methods indicates that conflict rarely occurs over topics such as religion, politics, sex, and drugs but rather over issues of noncompliance and the breaking of family rules set by parents (Smetana, 1989).

Many studies have examined the frequency of conflict with family members during adolescence; however, less is known about adolescents' resolution of their conflicts with parents and siblings. Research on family members' conflict resolution generally has focused on married couples' strategies (e.g., Gottman, 1994; Kurdek, 1994, 1995). This work has shown that disagreements may be resolved effectively, for example, through compromise, or ineffectively, such as through withdrawal (Katz & Gottman, 1993; Reese-Weber & Bartle-Haring, 1998). Furthermore, effective resolution is linked to more positive family relations. Similar to the findings regarding married couples, other work has shown that parents and adolescents engage in a range of resolution strategies, with compromise and negotiation being used least often (Montemayor & Hanson, 1985; Smetana, Yau, & Hanson, 1991; Vuchinich, 1987). Some work suggests that adolescent boys have more unresolved conflicts with parents than do girls (Smetana et al., 1991). We know little about whether there is variation across family relationships in effective conflict resolution or whether boys and girls differ in their conflict resolution with parents and siblings

This study investigated sources of parent-child conflicts, punitive measures and youths' self esteem. The study intended to answer four research questions:

3. Research Methodology

This study employed a case study research design. Convenient sample of 71 youths available in a Christmas break meeting were given some questionnaires to fill. Expert judgment ensured validity of research instruments, and reliability test, as seen in Table 1, yielded Cronbach's alpha of .866 for Source of Conflicts, .730 for Punitive Measures and .91 for Self Esteem. Statistical treatment of data employed t-test and Pearson product moment correlation coefficient.

Table 1

Reliability Test of the Questionnaire Instrument

VARIABLE	ITEMS	RELIABILITY
Sources of Conflicts	14	.866
Punitive Measures	7	.730
Self-Esteem	7	.921

4. Results and Discussions

This section presents results and discusses findings of this study by the help of statistical tables. The discussion is done by four research questions that guided this study.

1. What are perceived sources of conflict among youths of Eastern Kenya?

This research question employed Descriptive Statistics to determine perceived sources of conflicts between youths and their parents. In order to answer it, the following scale was used: 3.50-4.00 = Strong Agreement, 2.50-3.49 = Agreement, 1.50-2.49 = Disagreement and 1.00-1.49 = Strong Disagreement.

Table 2

Sources of Conflicts between the youths and their parents

SN	Source of Conflict	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
1	Academic Performance	2.5634	1.10496
2	Household chores (washing dishes, fetching firewood, etc)	2.4857	1.18863
3	Religion	2.3803	1.23481
4	Financial Resources	2.2676	1.17056
5	Idleness/ Wastage of Time	2.2254	1.19758
6	Being away from home and returning late	2.2254	1.22121
7	Disapproval of personal relationships	2.1972	1.15412
8	Usage of rude languages	2.0986	1.18509
9	Lying to parents	2.0845	1.13069
10	Early marriage	2.0409	1.24453
11	Pregnancy before marriage	2.0429	1.29027
12	Restriction from appearance/ passing leisure time	2.0141	1.12749
13	Substance use/ cigarette/ Alcohol/ drugs	1.9437	1.28605
14	Public pressure/ humiliation from parents	1.8028	1.05044

As Table 2 indicates, academic performance (M= 2.5653, SD= 1.10496) was the only factor that the youths perceived to be the source of conflict between them and their parents. The rest of

factors measured below 2.50-3.49, meaning the youths disagreed that the following factors are not sources of conflicts between them and their parents: Household chores, religion, financial resources, idleness/ wastage of time, being away from home and returning late, disapproval of personal relationships, usage of rude languages, lying to parents, early marriages, pregnancy before marriage, restrictions from appearance/ passing leisure time, substance use and public pressure/ humiliation from parents.

2. Is there significant difference in perception of punitive measures by the youths categorized according to their gender?

This research question called for testing of a subsequent null hypothesis which states: *There is no significant difference in perception of punitive measures by the youths categorized according to their gender.*

Independent sample *t*-test was employed in determining significant differences, if any. As seen in Table 3, the mean score of males (1.9422) was slightly higher than that of their female counterparts (1.8442), but the mean scores of both groups were within 1.50-2.49 meaning disagree. This implies that the youths perceived lack of punitive measures from their parents in spite of perceived academic performance as source of conflict.

The Sig of .653 in Table 4, further, is greater than the critical value (.005) meaning that the difference happens by chance. Therefore, we accept the null hypothesis that: There is no significant difference in perception of punitive measures by the youths categorized according to their gender.

Table 3
Group Statistics on Punitive Measures by Gender

gender of respondents	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
PUNITIVE male	38	1.9422	.96719	.15690
female	33	1.8442	.84618	.14730

Table 4
Independent Sample Test on Punitive Measures by Gender

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper

PURNITI	Equal variances assumed	.029	.865	.451	69	.653	.09807	.21726	-.33535	.53150
VE	Equal variances not assumed			.456	68.994	.650	.09807	.21521	-.33126	.52741

3. Is there significant difference in perceived level of self-esteem by the youths categorized according to their gender?

This research question called for testing of a subsequent null hypothesis which states: *There is no significant difference in perceived level of self-esteem by the youths categorized according to their gender.*

Independent sample *t*-test was employed in determining significant differences, if any. As seen in Table 5, the mean score of females (3.4459) was slightly higher than that of their male counterparts (3.3383), but the mean scores of both groups were within 2.50-3.49 meaning agreement. This implies that the youths perceived to be self -esteemed.

The Sig of .547 in Table 46, further, is greater than the critical value (.005) meaning that the difference happens by chance. Therefore, we accept the null hypothesis that: There is no significant difference in perceived level of self-esteem by the youths categorized according to their gender. Both groups agreeing to have self esteem.

Table 5
Group Statistics on Youths' Perceived Self Esteem

	gender of respondents	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
ESTEEM	male	38	3.3383	.77426	.12560
	female	33	3.4459	.72118	.12554

Table 6
Independent Sample Test on Youths' Perceived Self Esteem

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
ESTEE M	Equal variances assumed	.284	.596	-.603	69	.549	-.10754	.17849	-.46361	.24853
	Equal variances not assumed			-.606	68.642	.547	-.10754	.17758	-.46185	.24676

4. Is there significant relationship between perception of punitive measures, self-esteem and sources of conflict among the youths?

This research question called for testing of a subsequent null hypothesis which states: *There is no significant relationship between perception of punitive measures, self-esteem and sources of conflict among the youths.*

Pearson-Product moment correlation coefficient was employed in determining correlations, if any. As seen in Table 7, there is a moderate (.459), yet positive correlation between sources of conflict and punitive measures, meaning the higher the sources of conflict, the higher the punitive measures.

The Table also indicates a weak (.398), yet inverse correlation between punitive measures and self esteem of the youths, meaning, the higher the punitive measures, the less the self-esteem of the youths under investigation. This suggests that in order to raise the youths' self esteem, punishment measures need to be reduced.

Table 7
Correlations of sources of conflicts, punitive measures and self esteem

		SOURCE	PUNITIVE	ESTEEM
SOURCE	Pearson Correlation	1	.495**	-.203
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.090
	N	71	71	71
PUNITIVE	Pearson Correlation	.495**	1	-.398**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.001
	N	71	71	71
ESTEEM	Pearson Correlation	-.203	-.398**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.090	.001	
	N	71	71	71

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

References

Alsarairh, K. S, (2013). Prediction of emotional intelligence, self esteem and academic achievement of Bullying in Elementary Schools. *Journal of Education and Practice*, (4)15, 8-14.

Buhrmester, D. (1992). The developmental course of sibling and peer relationships. In FBoer &

- J. Dunn (Eds.), *Children's sibling relationships: Developmental and clinical issues* (pp. 19-40). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Collins, W. A. (1990). Parent-child relationships in the transition to adolescence: Continuity and change in interaction, affect, and cognition. In R. Montemayor, G. Adams, & T. Gullotta (Eds.), *Advances in adolescent development. From childhood to adolescence: A transitional period?* (pp. 85-106). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Collins, W. A., & Russell, G. (1991). Mother-child and father-child relationships in middle childhood and adolescence: A developmental analysis. *Developmental Review, 11*, 99-136. doi:10.1016/0273-2297(91)90004-8.
- Constantine MG (2006). Perceived family conflict, parental attachment, and depression in African American female adolescents. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 12*(4), 697–709.
- Denwigwe, C. P., and Akpama, E. (2013). Sex Differences in Academic Self –Esteem of Secondary School Students in Abuja Metropolis of Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Practice, 4*(13), 22-27.
- Eamon MK, Mulder C (2005). Predicting antisocial behavior among Latino young adolescents: An ecological systems analysis. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 75*(1), 117–127.
- Fleming CB, Kim H, Harachi TW, Catalano RF (2002). Family processes for children in early elementary school as predictors of smoking initiation. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 30*:184–189.
- Formoso D, Gonzales NA, Aiken LS (2000). Family conflict and children's internalizing and externalizing behavior: Protective factors. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 28*(2):175–199.
- Gottman, J. M. (1994). *What predicts divorce? The relationship between marital processes and marital outcomes*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Hannum JW, Dvorak DM (2004). Effects of family conflict, divorce, and attachment patterns on the psychological distress and social adjustment of college freshmen. *Journal of College Student Development, 45*(1):27–42.
- Hill, J. (1988). Adapting to menarche: Familial control and conflict. In M. Gunnar & W. A. Collins (Eds.), *Minnesota symposia on child psychology: Vol. 21. Development during the transition to adolescence* (pp. 43-77). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Hill KG, Hawkins JD, Catalano RF, Abbott RD, Guo J (2005). Family influences on the risk of daily smoking initiation. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 37*:202–210.

- Holmbeck, G. N. (1996). A model of family relational transformations during the transition to adolescence: Parent-adolescence conflict and adaptations. In J. A. Graber, J. Brooks-Gunn, & A. C. Petersen (Eds.), *Transitions through adolescence: Interpersonal domains and context* (pp. 167-199). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Igomu, A., and Muyange, L. T. (2013). Relationship Between Self-Esteem And Personal Development Of Prison Inmates In Jalingo, Taraba State Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 4(4), 277-283.
- Ingoldsby E.M, Shaw D.S, Winslow E, Schonberg M, Gilliom M, Criss M.M (2006). Neighborhood disadvantage, parent-child conflict, neighborhood peer relationships, and early antisocial behavior problem trajectories. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*. 34(3):303-319.
- Katz, L. F., & Gottman, J. M. (1993). Patterns of marital conflict predict children's internalizing and externalizing behaviors. *Developmental Psychology*, 29, 940-950.
- Kurdek, L. A. (1994). Conflict resolution styles in gay, lesbian, heterosexual nonparent, and heterosexual parent couples. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 56, 705-722.
- Kurdek, L. A. (1995). Predicting change in marital satisfaction from husbands' and wives' conflict resolution styles. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 57, 153-164.
- Larson, R., & Richards, M. H. (1991). Daily companionship in late childhood and early adolescence: Changing developmental contexts. *Child Development*, 62, 284-300.
- Laursen, B., Coy, K. C., & Collins, W. A. (1998). Reconsidering changes in parent-child conflict across adolescence: A meta-analysis. *Child Development*, 69, 817-832.
- Laursen, B., & Collins, W. A. (1994). Interpersonal conflict during adolescence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 115, 197-209.
- Laursen, B., & Collins, W. A. (2009). Parent-child relationships during adolescence. In R. M. Lerner & L. Steinberg (Eds.), *Handbook of adolescent psychology, Vol 2: Contextual influences on adolescent development* (pp. 3-42). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Lempers, J. D., & Clark-Lempers, D. S. (1992). Young, middle, and late adolescents' comparison of the functional importance of five significant relationships. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 21, 53-95.
- McQueen A, Getz J.G., Bray J.H (2003). Acculturation, substance use, and deviant behavior: Examining separation and family conflict as mediators. *Child Development*, 74(6):1737-1750.
- Montemayor, R., & Hanson, E. (1985). A naturalistic view of conflict between adolescents and

- their parents and siblings. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 5, 23-30.
- Morris, A. S., Cui, L., & Steinberg, L. (2013). Parenting research and themes: What we have learned and where to go next. In R. E. Larzelere, A. S. Morris & A. W. Harrist (Eds.), *Authoritative parenting: Synthesizing nurturance and discipline for optimal child development*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Paikoff, R., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (1991). Do parent-child relationships change during puberty? *Psychological Bulletin*, 110, 37-66.
- Prado, G., Huang, S., Maldonado-Molina, M., Bandiera, F., Schwartz, S. J., de la Vega, P., Brown, C. H., & Pantin, H. (2010). An empirical test of ecodevelopmental theory in predicting HIV risk behaviors among Hispanic youth. *Health Education and Behavior*, 37, 97-114. doi:10.1177/1090198109349218
- Reese-Weber, M., & Bartle-Haring, S. (1998). Conflict resolution styles in family subsystems and adolescent romantic relationships. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 27, 735-752.
- Reis, H. T., Collins, W. A., & Berscheid, E. (2000). The relationship context of human behavior and development. *Psychological Bulletin*, 126, 844-872. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.126.6.844.
- Sagrestano, L. M., McCormick, S. H., Paikoff, R. L., & Holmbeck, G. N. (1999). Pubertal development and parent-child conflict in low-income, urban, African American adolescents. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 9, 85-107.
- Savin-Williams, R. C., & Small, S. A. (1986). The timing of puberty and its relationship to adolescent and parent perceptions of family interactions. *Developmental Psychology*, 22, 342-347.
- Santisteban, D. A., Coatsworth, J. D., Briones, E., Kurtines, W., & Szapocznik, J. (2012). Beyond acculturation: An investigation of the relationship of familism and parenting to behavior problems in Hispanic youth. *Family Process*, 51, 470-482. doi:10.1111/j.1545-5300.2012.01414.x
- Smetana, J. G. (1983). Social-cognitive development: Domain distinctions and coordinations. *Developmental Review*, 3, 131-147. doi:10.1016/0273-2297(83)90027-8
- Smetana, J. G. (1989). Adolescents' and parents' reasoning about actual family conflict. *Child Development*, 60, 1052-1067.
- Smetana, J. G., Yau, J., & Hanson, S. (1991). Conflict resolution in families with adolescents. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 1, 189-206.

- Smith, K. A., & Forehand, R. (1986). Parent-adolescent conflict: Comparison and prediction of the perceptions of mothers, fathers, and daughters. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 6*, 353-367.
- Steinberg, L. (1987). Impact of puberty on family relations: Effects of pubertal status and pubertal timing. *Developmental Psychology, 23*, 451-460.
- Steinberg, L. (1988). Reciprocal relations between parent-child distance and pubertal maturation. *Developmental Psychology, 24*, 122-128.
- Vuchinich, S. (1987). Starting and stopping spontaneous family conflicts. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 49*, 591-601.
- Wilkinson, R. B. (2012). Parents and adolescents. In P. Noller & G. C. Karantzas (Eds.), *The Wiley-Blackwell handbook of couples and family relationships* (pp. 66-81). Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Youniss, J. (1987). *Adolescent relations with mothers, fathers and friends*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.