

An investigation on the influence of parental conflict on relationship satisfaction

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Acknowledgments

Primarily, I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude to God as it was my faith in Him which kept me grounded and rooted throughout the past couple of months. I would like to thank Dr. Caoimhe Hannigan for her support and guidance as my thesis supervisor. I am extremely grateful for her corrections, complete engagement, advice, and encouragement as she guided me in completing my thesis. Furthermore, I would like to thank both Dr. Joanna Power and Dr. Conor Nolan my final project co-ordinators for the additional support and information given both in class and personally throughout the academic year. I would like to thank the participants in my study, who took the time to complete my study having an important role in generating the findings of my study. For the continuous support and encouragement, the past three years, I would like to thank the staff from the psychology department in the National College of Ireland and my class mates also. Lastly, I would like to thank my mum, my family, and friends and especially my very special friend Cynthia Nwagwu for their continuous and outstanding support throughout my college years.

Abstract

Conflict is a necessary and normal aspect of family life. Nonetheless, if conflict between parents is dealt in a destructive way instead of a constructive way, it can have consequences which can be both negative for both the children and their parents. The aim of this study is to investigate if parental conflict during childhood has effects on romantic relationship satisfaction in young people. Investigating if there is a gender difference in romantic relationship satisfaction in young people and if having a religious belief plays a role in high levels of romantic relationship satisfaction. This study consisted of 697 participants (males = 76; females = 621), participants were aged between 18-30 and were currently in a romantic relationship or had been one in the previous twelve months. No significant differences were found between males and females, though females scored higher by a small difference than males. No significant differences between those with or without a religious belief, though those with no religious belief scored slightly higher than those with a religious belief. Parental conflict during childhood was found to not correlate with levels of romantic relationship satisfaction in young adults.

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Introduction

What is parental conflict?

Conflict is a regular aspect of family life. Family-centred experiences are assumed to be the basis of the development of a child. Nevertheless, when conflict between parents are handled or resolved in a destructive way instead of a constructive way, it can lead to consequences that are negative for both the parents and children. Research on the effects of parental conflict dates back as far as the 1980's. Children can be vulnerable to the impact of conflict which can cause maladjustment and lead to negative effects on cognitive, educational, psycho-biological and social functioning (Cummings & Davies, 2002). There are two key theories that include the key aspects of a child's response to parental conflicts which are cognitive, emotional and behavioural responses. The cognitive-contextual framework of Grych and Fincham (1990) and the emotional security of Davies and Cummings (1994).

Key theories on aspects of parental conflict

The aim of Grych and Fincham (1990) cognitive-contextual framework is to explain the relationship between a child's problematic behaviours and parental conflicts. A child identifies conflict between their parents as a stressor, regarding this perception both primary and secondary processing stages begin to generate, which then influences the child's coping behaviour. The affects to the child are influenced by what the child observes of the parental conflict by attributional styles and behaviour influencing cognitive elaboration process and the child's behaviour (Grych and Fincham, 1990). Duration, resolution, intensity, and content are part of the most vital characteristics of parental conflicts, the authors suggest that these effects are cumulative. Grych and Fincham (1990) have a comprehensible distinction

between distal and proximal contextual factors when referring to the psychological aspects of the child.

Proximal contextual factors are an indication of the child's feelings and thoughts immediately prior to the conflict and distal contextual factors include past experiences of the child with conflicts and a perception of their emotional climate, gender, and temperament. A positive climate can aid as a positive buffer against stressors. In concern to the various attribution and efficacy expectations, attribution of responsibility and trigger of guilt and emotions change with age. For example, younger children tend to blame themselves leading them to feel negative emotions and might exhibit "magical thinking" believing that they can stop conflict between their parents. Children who are older conversely have realistic expectations and estimates and better skills to solve conflicts between their parents (Grych & Fincham, 1990).

The security hypothesis by Davies and Cummings (1994) was developed to complement Grych and Fincham (1990) cognitive-contextual framework. The emotional security hypothesis perception looks at the relationship between the child and their parent from the child's perception. Past experiences of parental conflict have an influence on emotional security, emotional bond between the parents and children, following the quality of the marital relationship of the parents for the future responses to their conflict. How the child handles, perceives and copes with parental conflict the child's emotional security will either increase or decrease which will affect the wellbeing of the child. There are three different ways in which emotional security can affect functional ability of the child: the child's regulation of their emotional arousal, the child's attempt to regulate their parents emotional and lastly by internal representation (Davies & Cummings, 1994).

Effects of parental conflict on children and adult children

Various previous studies that have been conducted on effects of parental conflict on children has revealed that constructive and destructive marital tactic styles towards conflict can have many different consequences on children, especially destructive parental conflict can have more negative effects on children's condition and behaviour. Constructive style use includes verbal and physical affection, support, resolution, and problem solving which elicit positive reactive emotions from individuals. Destructive tactics includes verbal abuse, non-verbal anger, physical aggression, and withdrawal which elicits negative emotions and behavioural reactions (McCoy, George, Cummings, & Davies, 2013). Davies, Myers,

Cummings and Heindel (1999) conducted a study, where children were showed a video that had conflict in them and afterwards witnessed real life scenarios of conflict. The results of their study indicated that children's exposure to destructive conflict behaviour provokes a more negative reaction in children than exposure to constructive conflict behaviour. Geoke-Morey et al. (2003) also conducted a study showing children videos with conflict to children aged between 8 and 16 years old, asking them in what way they would react if they witnessed their own parents arguing in the same way. The children responded that they would either intervene or completely avoid destructive conflict rather than a constructive conflict.

The role of which parenting plays in a child's development is vital, adequate styles of parenting provides children with a secure foundation to allow them to explore their environment (Fozard & Gubi, 2017). Throughout the life cycle, dependency remains active, attachment and exposure to stressful life events can reactivate the attachment system (Harold, Pryor, & Reynolds, 2001). Emotional security of children can become disrupted witnessing destructive conflict, due to their internal goals on family are disrupted where they are likely to become emotionally distraught (McCoy, Cummings, & Davies, 2008). Fozard & Gubi

(2017) conducted research on a small sample of four aged 20 and above, examining the effects of parental conflict.

Four themes emerged from their data collected: impact of family structure, feelings of loss, impacts to personal and professional development and trauma associated with conflict. Security of the participants at home was greatly impacted from the levels of arguing and tension between participants. Leading them to feelings of vulnerability and distress, leaving them feeling powerless in the situation. Situations where participants felt a lack of security at home, they attempted to find security elsewhere such as in friends or siblings. Due to this the authors led to the assumption that a child may search for security elsewhere if security is not present at home (Fozard & Gubi, 2017). Results obtained from their data also suggested that parental conflict has an impact on the family structure. Participants distinguished having to take on the role of supporting their parents and having the feeling of wanting to protect their parent also, it was noted that taking on this role caused them great responsibility and stress (Fozard & Gubi, 2017).

In previous research conducted, researchers have found that the way in which children understand the conflict between their parents has different effects on them both emotionally and behaviourally. Children who have the tendency to blame themselves for their parents conflict they were much more likely to experience behavioural problems, and those children who felt threatened by their parent's conflict were more likely to experience depression ("why family conflict affects some children more than others"2013). Much of the evidence related to parental conflict has focused on the effects of this conflict during childhood. It is also important to understand that longer-term effects of parental conflict experienced during childhood, but only a limited number of studies have focused on these effects on children later in life, such as when they reach young adulthood.

Attachment theory

Fozard & Gubi (2017) described how an individual who lacks security at home from parents, may go elsewhere to find a source of security, this could potentially be explained through attachment theory. Attachment theory can be characterized by behaviours which are specific in children, for example searching for proximity to their attachment figure, when they may be upset or feeling threatened (Bowlby, 1969). This form of attachment may be absent in a child's life who is constantly being exposed to parental conflict in their home, leading them to find it elsewhere such as in romantic relationships as they grow older. Attachment theory suggests that mental representations of an individual's childhood experiences with their primary caregivers serve as the primary mechanism, which attachment in early childhood experiences shape and impact their interpersonal experiences later in their life (Bowlby, 1969, 1973).

Romantic relationship satisfaction, religion, and gender differences

Romantic relationships during early adulthood have many important implications for both the individual and society in which they are in (Berscheid, 1999). A successful romantic relationship can promote a good well-being, failure to maintain and establish a healthy romantic relationship can lead to emotional and physical distress (Simon & Marcussen, 1999). De Andrade and Garcia (2012) described the constructs in which relationship satisfaction could be accessed, through a one-dimensional model being the general quality of the relationship and it can also be assessed through multi-dimensional perspectives which are specific variables. Previous research conducted such as the study by Ubando (2016) has found that males show higher levels of positive perception of their own intimacy, on the other hand results indicated that males report much higher level of verbal emotional expressivity had low levels of relationship satisfaction.

It is important to understand the predictors that can increase the likelihood of forming a romantic relationship that is both stable and satisfying. Across many theoretical studies family is a relevant origin for healthy romantic relationships (Conger, Cui, Bryant, & Elder, 2000). Despite, there being many research around family being the foundation of a positive romantic relationship satisfaction, little is known about the role family, specifically parents play in a young adult's romantic relationship satisfaction (Conger, Cui, Bryant, & Elder, 2000).

There are expectations that due to the increase of secularization of human societies over the past century, that the impact on family life that religion makes has diminished, studies that have been conducted during the past 35 and more years clearly indicate that religion is one of the salient factors in parenting and marriages (Mahoney, 2005). Cui, Ming & Pasley (2008) conducted a study examining the link between young adult's romantic relationship satisfaction between parental divorce and marital conflict, also testing if offspring efficacy beliefs and conflict can mediate this association. Researching if having a religious can promote high levels of relationship satisfaction.

They hypothesized that parental conflict and parental divorce would link directly to young adult's quality through their relationship and their own relationship conflicts. Results which they obtained though their study indicated that marital conflict is related to young adult's lack of relationship efficacy rather than parental divorce. Cui and colleagues study highlighted how interparental conflict is related strongly to young adult's own conflict in their romantic relationships, in turn linking with the quality of their relationship. Despite this study making major progress in looking at the association between parental conflict, divorce and romantic relationship satisfaction in young adults, the authors emphasized on the importance for more investigation as the study prompted questions about why parental

divorce and parental conflict is related to offspring relationship characteristics (Cui, Ming, & Pasley, 2008).

Religiosity has been seen in previous studies to play a significant role in the maintenance of romantic relationships for married couples, and seen as a form of raising marital quality (Fincham, Ajayi & Beach, 2011). Previous studies for example have found a correlation between lower divorce rates for those who attend religious services, and were found to also have higher marital commitment (Lopez, Riggs, Pollard & Hook 2011; Ellison, Burdette & Bardford Wilcox, 2010). A study conducted by Fincham, Ajayi & Beach (2011) found that in African America heterosexual couples, the religiosity of the husband was not just important for the satisfaction of the relationship but also for the satisfaction of their wives, meaning if the husband had a religious belief that in plays a role for high levels of relationship satisfaction for both the male and female in the relationship. Additionally, in a study conducted by Allgood, Harris, Skogrand & Lee (2008) found that an individual who has a religious belief was associated with high levels of dedication to their romantic partners and higher levels of moral obligation to their relationship, which was related to an increased commitment to the relationship.

Rationale

There are plenty of past research on parental conflict and its effects on children and a limited amount looking at its effects on young adults. Likewise, research conducted on romantic relationship satisfaction, majority of previous studies has been done on married couples, in past recent years study has been conducted on young adults who are only dating. Religiosity has been investigated in association to romantic relationship satisfaction, but all three have not been looked at together. Could possibly having a religious belief despite being exposed to destructive parental conflict be associated with high levels of romantic

relationship satisfaction in young people? This being one of the many questions that arise from past articles, such as which gender is effected the most by parental conflict, and can having a religious conflict despite scoring high in parental conflict still score high in romantic relationship satisfaction?

Aims and hypothesis

The purpose of this study will be to investigate the association between parental conflict during childhood and romantic relationship satisfaction in young people in Ireland, and to investigate if having a religious belief can possibly influence relationship satisfaction, if scored high in parental conflict. Three hypothesis have been formed from previous findings that will be investigated: i) the male sample will show higher levels of negative relationship satisfaction than females, ii) participants with a religious belief will predict higher levels of positive relationship satisfaction than those who do not, iii) levels of parental conflict during childhood development will uniquely predict perceived levels of relationship satisfaction in young people.

Methods

Participants

The participants in this study were young Irish people aged between 18-30 of 697 individuals (mean age (19) =, 2.02 =) which consisted of 76 males (10%) and 621 females (89.1%). For participants to be eligible to participant they had to fit into the inclusion criteria, which was they must be aged between 18-30 and currently be in a romantic relationship or were in a romantic relationship in the previous twelve months.

Design

This is a quantitative study with within-participants where a cross sectional design is used. There is only one dependent variable in this study which is relationship satisfaction, the dependent variable is parental conflict, gender, age, and religious belief. The predictor variable is relationship satisfaction and criterion variable are the subscales of parental conflict in this study: frequency, intensity, and resolution.

Measures

Parents' marital conflict: To assess parents' marital conflict the Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale (CPIC; Grych, Seid, & Fincham 1992). CPIC scale has demonstrated adequate validity and reliability when used to examine inter-parental conflict amongst a college sample. Measures used in this study focused on only objective properties of inter-parental the same as the study conducted by Cui, Fincham, & Fiese (2008), the indicators for this study included frequency, intensity and resolution totaling up to an 18-item scale. Frequency, intensity and resolution have been indicated to reflect a single latent construct of parental conflict (Bickham & Fiese, 1997; Grych et al., 1992). Frequency consisted of six items, intensity seven items and resolution included five items. Each item has three responses which participants could give 1=true, 2=sort of true, 3=false, examples of the items include "My parents hardly every disagreed or argued" (frequency), My parents have a

tendency to get very angry when they got into an argument or disagreement” (intensity) and “When my parents got into an argument, they usually worked it out” (resolution). Refer to **appendix A** to see how each question is scored. When necessary items were recorded in order for a high score to be obtained. This scale was deemed reliable and valid as the alpha coefficients for the study conducted by Cui, Fincham, & Fiese (2008) for intensity, resolution and frequency were .89, .87, and .85, respectively. Reliability analysis was run for this specific study, which resulted in a Cronbach alpha for all subscales calculated of .85.

Relationship satisfaction: To assess romantic relationship satisfaction amongst the participants the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS), a 14-item scale (Busby, Christensen, Crane, & Larson, 1995). The original scale was developed by Spanier (1976) to measure quality of marital relationship. The RDAS scale for this study consists of three subscales: Consensus which assesses values, affection and decision making, Satisfaction assessing conflict items and stability and lastly Cohesion which assesses discussion and activities in a relationship. For the consensus scales participants were required to answer between 1. always agree, 2. almost always agree, 3. occasionally agree, 4. frequently disagree, 5. almost always disagree, 5. always disagree. For the satisfaction scales participants were required to answer between 1. all the time, 2. most of the time, 3. occasionally, 4. rarely, 5. never. Lastly for cohesion participants were required to answer between 1. everyday 2. almost every day, 3. occasionally, 4. rarely, 5. never. Refer to **appendix B** to see how each question is scored. Those who score low in the measures will reflect higher levels of negative romantic relationship satisfaction. The RDAS scale has been deemed reliable and valid with a validity of .88 and with a Cronbach’s alpha coefficients in previous studies of 0.80 to 0.90. Reliability analysis was run for this specific study, which resulted in a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .95.

Procedure

Participants were recruited by receiving a link through email, messenger and text message which brought them onto a google doc form, where they were given the option to participate in the study. Once the web page was fully loaded, participants are greeted by some information on the researcher (**see appendix C**), the information sheet was followed, giving the participant insight on the inclusion criteria for the study. To be eligible to participate in the study the participant must be aged between 18-30 and currently be in a romantic relationship or had been in one the previous twelve months. The information sheet included detailed information about the nature of the study and what they would be required to do to complete the questionnaire (**see appendix D**). Participants were told in the information sheet that participation is entirely voluntarily, anonymous, and that they may withdraw from the study at any given time without facing any penalties. Participants were also informed that they were free to share the link to the questionnaire with family and friends, information on how participants could contact the researcher were also provided.

The consent form was followed (**see appendix E**) participants were required to read the form and consent to participating in the study, if consent was not given participants would have been unable to continue with the questionnaire. Participants were estimated to complete the questionnaire within approximately fifteen minutes. Before commencing the study, participants were asked basic demographic questions such as their age and gender, participants were also asked to answer either yes or no, to if they have a religious belief. Participants were then brought onto parental conflict questions where brief information was given (see appendix A) about the questions and how they should be answered. Relationship satisfaction questions (**see appendix B**) followed up with a brief information, and participants were told to indicate to which extent they agreed to the questions asked.

On completion of the questionnaire a debrief sheet (**see appendix F**) was at the end, providing some more information about the study and helplines if any distress may of arise

due to participation in this study. Participants were required to click submit for their responses to be recorded.

Ethical approval was provided ethical approval broad in the National College of Ireland.

Results

Table 1

Frequencies for the current sample on each demographic variable (N = 697), table indicating frequency and valid percentage for gender and religious belief.

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Gender		
Male	76	10.9
Female	621	89.1
Religious Belief		
Yes	319	45.8
No	374	53.7

Table 2

Descriptive statistics of all continuous variables, including mean (95% confidence intervals), standard error mean, median, standard deviation, and range.

	Mean (95% Confidence Intervals)	Std. Error Mean	Median	SD	Range
PC-Frequency	13.57 (6.00-18.00)	.14	14	3.67	6-18
PC-Intensity	13.32 (7.00-21.00)	.17	13	4.40	7-21
PC-Resolution	9.95 (5.00-15.00)	.12	10	3.16	5-15
RS-Consensus	23.05 (.00-30.00)	.16	24	4.02	0-30
RS-Cohesion	9.43 (1.00-16.00)	.10	10	2.60	1-16
RS-Satisfaction	7.63 (.00-12.00)	.08	8	2.24	0-12
RS-Total	40.34 (15.00-57.00)	.28	41	6.89	15-57

Note: PC = parental conflict; RS = relationship satisfaction

Inferential statistics

An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare levels of relationship satisfaction between males and females. There no significant difference in scores ($t(198) = -1.68, p = .093$) with females ($M = 40.51, SD = 6.86$) scoring higher than males ($M = 38.89, SD = 6.97$). The magnitude of the mean differences in the means (mean difference = -1.61, 95% CI: -3.50 - .26) was small (Cohen's $d = .23$).

A second independent sample t-test was conducted to compare relationship satisfaction levels against two groups, those with a religious belief and those who do not have a religious belief. There was no significant difference in scores ($t(198) = 1.24, p = .216$) those with no religious belief ($M = 40.75, SD = 6.41$) scoring higher than those with a

religious belief ($M = 40.03$, $SD = 7.25$). The magnitude of the mean differences in the means (mean difference = .72, 95% CI: -.41 – 1.85) was small (Cohen's $d = 0.10$).

Multiple regression analysis was performed to determine if levels of parental conflict during childhood would predict perceived levels of relationship satisfaction in young adults. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. The correlations between the predictor variables which is the three subscales of parental conflict: frequency, intensity and resolution and the criterion variable which is relationship satisfaction included in the study were examined (see Table 1 for full details). All three of the predictor variables were significantly correlated with the criterion variable, and these significant effects ranged from $r = -.130$ (resolution) to $r = -.139$ (frequency). The correlations between the predictor variables were also assessed with r values ranging from .719 to .81. These results indicate that there was no violation of the assumption of multicollinearity and that the data was suitable for examination through multiple linear regression analysis.

Since no *a priori* hypotheses had been made to determine the order of entry of the predictor variables, a direct method was used for the analysis. The three predictor variables explained 2.1% of variance in relationship satisfaction levels ($F(3, 530) = 3.86$, $p = .009$). Three of the variables were found to not uniquely predict negative relationship satisfaction levels to a statistically significant level: frequency ($\beta = -.08$, $p < .322$), intensity ($\beta = -.03$, $p = .698$), and resolution ($\beta = -.05$, $p = .459$) (see Table 2 for full details).

Table 3

Regression analysis

	<i>R</i> ²	<i>β</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>C</i>
Model	.016**				
Frequency		-.07	-.14	.14	-.42 / .14
Intensity		.03	-.05	.12	-.30 / .20
Resolution		-.05	-.11	.14	-.40 / .18

Note: Statistical significance: **p* < .05**Table 4**

Correlations between all continuous variables.

Variables	1	2	3	
1. RDAS Total	1			
2. PC Frequency	-.14	1		
3. PC Intensity	-.13	.82*	1	
4. PC Resolution	-.13	.72*	.75*	1

Note. Statistical significance: **p* < .05; ***p* < .01; ****p* < .001

Discussion

Findings

Motivated by the necessity to gain a deeper understanding of the effects of parental conflict and romantic relationships in young adults, the researcher examined jointly the role parental conflict has in romantic relationship satisfaction in young adults. Contradicting earlier arguments made and previous research, the findings of this study indicated that parental conflict during childhood and romantic relationship satisfaction do not correlate. As there is no existence in the relationship between parental conflict and relationship satisfaction, or whether the predictor variables attribute to positive or negative relationship satisfaction or even a shared variance between the two constructs.

The first hypothesis was that males would score higher in levels of relationship satisfaction than females. There was no significance in scores found between males and females, though females did score higher ($M = 40.51$) than the male sample size (38.89) the difference being of only 1.62 . Rejecting the hypothesis that males would score higher in perceived negative relationship satisfaction than the female sample size of this study. The second hypothesis was that participants with a religious belief will show higher levels of relationship satisfaction than those who do not have a religious belief. There was no significance in scores found between those with a religious belief and those who do not have a religious belief. A difference in scores was found between the variables, with those with no religious belief scored higher ($M = 40.75$) than those with a religious belief ($M = 40.03$) the difference being of 0.32 . Rejecting the hypothesis that those with a religious belief would score higher in relationship satisfaction than those who do not have a religious belief.

The last hypothesis was that higher levels of parental conflict during childhood would predict perceived negative levels of romantic relationship satisfaction. All three of the predictor variables (intensity, frequency, and resolution) were significantly correlated with the criterion variable (parental conflict) with the effect ranging from $r = -.130$ (resolution) to $r = -.139$ (frequency). The three predictor variables explained only 2.1% of the variance between relationship satisfaction levels. It was found that the three subscales of parental conflict used: intensity, frequency, and resolution does not predict negative romantic relationship satisfaction.

As this was the main aim of the study, which was an investigation into the potential that parental conflict during childhood could have effects on the offspring's romantic relationships as they grow in young adulthood, the null hypothesis had to be rejected. Despite the model of the study being significant, the predictor variables of this study (subscales of parental conflict: intensity, frequency, and resolution) are not statistically significant to the criterion variable (romantic relationship satisfaction) of this study. The Normal P-P plot of the Regression Standardised Residual (see figure 1 in appendix), the points did not lie in a reasonably diagonal straight line, from the bottom left to the top right. The point began to curve out about 0.3 and 0.6. For the scatterplot chart (see figure 2 in appendix), the residuals were not rectangularly distributed, with some outliers though there were many scores concentrated in the centre along the point 0.

As seen from the results obtained from this study, it contradicts previous studies mentioned in the introduction about the effects of parental conflict on children and young adults. As one of the constant reoccurring predictor of offspring romantic relationship satisfaction is family of origin, parental marital conflict (Cui et al., 2008). Though there are differences in the findings from past research, they reflect variability in research methods which can bring fourth doubt that the subscales used in this study (intensity, frequency, and

resolution) can alone account for the inconsistency in findings. Contradicting earlier arguments made interparental conflict has been found to strongly correlate with levels of relationship satisfaction, despite this study results to be the complete opposite. There could be many potential reasons why the results of this study have defied expectations made earlier on in this study.

As children emerge into adulthood having a romantic relationship becomes one of the most important aspects of an individual's life (van den Brink, Vollman, Smeets, Hessen & Woertman, 2018). Satisfaction of one's relationship corresponds to the individual's judgement on the positivity of their relationship. As mentioned previously De Andrade and Garcia (2012) mentioned that relationship satisfaction can be assessed through one-dimensional models (general quality) and multidimensional perspectives (specific variables), this form was adapted to this current study also where consensus (values, affection and decision making), satisfaction (conflict items and stability) and cohesion (discussion and activities in the relationship). In the study conducted by De Andrade, Wachelke & Howat-Rodrigues (2015) found that in concern to their population sample of young adults who are Brazilian participants that men and women have similarities and differences which are complex in terms of their feelings and emotions. Males who are seen to have high levels of positive perception of their personal intimacy, reported high levels of verbal emotional expressivity highlight low levels of relationship satisfaction than women (Ubando, 2016). Which was predicted to be seen also in this study that males would score lower than females in relationship satisfaction, though in turned out to be no significant correlation between the males and females in the sample of this study. Though females scored higher in relationship satisfaction by 1.62, it made no statistical difference to the results.

Religion in past research has been seen to correlate with positive levels of relationship satisfaction in couples. Though in this study this hypothesis was rejected and no correlation

was seen between having or not having a religious belief to having positivity relationship satisfaction. Throughout the past few centuries the impact religion has on individuals has slowly began to diminish, compared to the impact for example it may have had for young adult's grand-parents or great grand-parents. Past research has found that religiosity plays a significant role in positive marital quality and maintaining a romantic relationship in married couples (Fincham, Ajayi & Beach). Results obtained by Lopez, Pollard, and Hook (2011) found that those who attended religious services displayed high levels of marital commitment. There could be many factors that could have caused the sample of this study to not result to the same outcome as previous studies that have been conducted in the past.

Limitations

As this study turned out to be non-significant there are many limitations to this study. This study was conducted on young adults, those who were aged between 18 to 30. Where many of the previous study did not focus only on a certain age group, but were focused on participants simply over the age of 18. Results seen from young adults could differ from for example those aged between 30-50, in means of these two different age groups having different life experiences and relationship expectations.

This study had a sample size of 697 participants but only 76 out of the 697 participants were males and 621 of their participants were females. The difference between the sample sizes in the gender could have played a major role in why there was no correlation in males and their levels of relationship satisfaction. This study did not control for demographics entirely, specifically ethnicity. This study was based on a sample of young adults living in Europe, and did not control for ethnicity, a large amount of previous studies focused on certain ethnicities, for example African-American. There is a possibility that a

difference could of have been seen in this study if the researcher accounted for the participant's ethnicity and grouped them.

Another limitation of this study is that the marital status of participants parents was also not accounted for. It was unknown if participants came from a married, divorced or single-parent homes. The effects of parental conflict have on an individual's romantic relationship could differ depending on the home they were raised in, as their perception on relationships could have been moulded by the environment they grew up in. Question 9 of the relationship satisfaction asks, "do you ever regret that you married (or lived together)?", over 75% of participants were unable to answer this questions as many of the participants in this study were under the age of 25 (mean age = 19) and are either not married or living with their partner. Which also raises the possibility that results may differ if study was conducted with married couples.

Recommendations

A recommendation for future studies would be that demographics should be controlled, as for ethnicity and that the marital status of the parents of the participants should be asked. By controlling these variables, it would allow researchers to group participants, allowing them to check for correlations amongst certain groups and their criterion variables. Future researchers should also study a different population or look at different variables for example an experimental study could also be used to measure if parental conflict during childhood has effects on offspring's romantic relationship satisfaction. Lastly, another recommendation would be that researches should attempt to aim for an even sample size between males and females if measuring which gender scores higher in relationship satisfaction.

Conclusion

In conclusion, parental conflict during childhood was found that in this study does not correlate with levels of relationship satisfaction in young adults in the population investigated in this study. The findings of this study contradict with existing theories and previous research. Due to this study being non-significant it indicates that more research may be needed to reconcile the differences which raised from this study.

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Appendix

Appendix A

Parental Conflict Scale

In every family there are times when parents don't get along. Below are some questions that ask about your experience of your parents arguing or disagreeing during your childhood.

Please answer these questions thinking about when you were growing up.

If your parents did not live together in the same house while you were growing up, think about a time when both of your parents lived in the same house, or times that they were together.

For each question, you should indicate your answer by selecting from: True; Somewhat True; or False. **(Questions marked with an asterisk (*) are reversed scored).**

1. T ST F I never seen my parents arguing or disagreeing. *
2. T ST F They may not have thought that I was aware of it, but my parents argued or disagreed a lot.
3. T ST F My parents were often mean to each other, even when I was around.
4. T ST F I often saw or heard my parents arguing.
5. T ST F Even if they didn't say it, I knew I was the blame when my parents argued. *
6. T ST F My parents often nagged and complained about each other around the house.
7. T ST F My parents got mad at each other when they argued.
8. T ST F When my parents had a disagreement they tended to discuss it quietly. *

9. T ST F When my parents had an argument they said mean things to each other.
10. T ST F When my parents had an argument they yelled at each other. *
11. T ST F My parents hardly ever yelled at each other when they had a disagreement.
12. T ST F My parents sometimes broke or threw things when they were having an argument.
13. T ST F My parents had shoved or pushed each other during an argument.
14. T ST F When my parents had an argument they usually worked it out. *
15. T ST F Even if my parents stopped arguing they stayed mad at each other.
16. T ST F When my parents disagreed about something, they usually came up with a solution. *
17. T ST F When my parents argued they usually made up straight after. *
18. T ST F After my parents had an argument with each other, they were friendly to each other. *
19. T ST F My parents were still mean towards each other after they had an argument.

Appendix B

Relationship Satisfaction

Majority of people have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below approximately the extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each of the following questions. **(Question marked with an asterisk (*) are reversed scored).**

	Always agree	Almost always agree	Occasionally agree	Frequently disagree	Almost always disagree	Always disagree
1. Religious matters						
2. Demonstration of affection						
3. Making major decisions						
4. Sex relations						
5. Conventionally (correct or proper behaviour)						
6. Career decisions						

	All the time	Most of the time	More often than not	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
7. how often do you discuss or						

<p>have considered divorce, separation or terminating the relationship? *</p>						
<p>8.how often do you and your partner quarrel? *</p>						
<p>9.do you ever regret that you married (or lived together)? *</p>						
<p>10.how often do you and your mate “get on</p>						

each's nerves"? *						
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	Everyday	Almost everyday	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	
11.do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?						
12.have stimulating exchange of ideas *						
13.work together on a project *						
14.calmly discuss						

something *						
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Appendix C

My name is Bianca Cupatela, and I am a final year Psychology student at National College of Ireland. As part of my degree, I am required to conduct an independent research project. I am using this online questionnaire to collect data for my research. This research is supervised by Dr. Caoimhe Hannigan, Lecturer in Psychology at NCI.

Appendix D

Information sheet

The aim of this research is to investigate the potential association between parental conflict and romantic relationship satisfaction.

Who can participate in this study?

To participate in this study, you must be aged between 18 and 30 and you must be currently in a romantic relationship, or have been in a romantic relationship during the past 12 months.

What does taking part in involve?

If you decide to take part in this study you will be required to complete this questionnaire. Participation in this study is voluntary and participants have the right to withdraw from the study without facing any penalties. Responses given in this study will be stored and kept in a safe place and no second party will have access to the data collected.

Confidential information will not be shared with others, as participant's privacy will be respected throughout this research and publication. The data collected in this study will be anonymous, therefore will not be identifiable. Removal of any data once submission has been made will not be possible.

Please feel free to share the link to this questionnaire to any of your friends and family once they fall under the inclusion criteria of this study (between the age of 18-30 and are currently in a romantic relationship or were in one the last twelve months).

If you may have any further questions in relation to this research, feel free to contact me at:

x16320293@student.ncirl.ie or my supervisor caoimhe.hannigan@ncirl.ie.

If you agree to take part in this study please click next, where you will be asked to read the consent form and tick the box to consent to your participation in this study.

Appendix E

Consent

Consent must be given in order to participate in this study.

Consent Form

- I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand I can ask questions about this research by contacting the researcher via email.
- I understand that participation involves revealing my age, gender and if I belong to a religious belief.

- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that all data is collected anonymously, and therefore no information about the identity of participants will be contained in any report of the study findings.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Do you consent to taking part in this study?

- Yes
- No

Appendix F

Debrief Sheet

I would like to thank you for taking part in this study, and I hope you have also enjoyed taking part in this study. Please click submit below to complete the questionnaire.

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether a person's experience of parental conflict during their childhood is related to their experience of romantic relationships in adulthood.

Participation in this study is voluntary, and if you wish you may withdraw from this study at any time before you submit your data. If you wish to withdraw at this point, you may close this web page without clicking submit, and your data will not be saved. There are no negative consequences associated with a decision to withdraw from participation.

Once you click submit it will no longer be possible to withdraw your data from this study, as all your data is being collected anonymously and cannot be identified for

withdrawal. Data collected will be analyzed and presented in the results section on my thesis and presented to my fellow students and lecturers as part of my project. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me by email x16320293@student.ncirl.ie or my supervisor caoimhe.hannigan@ncirl.ie.

If in any way participation in this study has made you feel distressed, please contact one of the following helplines:

The Samaritans – available 24 hours a day

Call: (01) 116 123

Email: jo@samaritans.ie

Website: www.samaritans.org

Niteline (Run by students for students) – lines open 9pm – 2:30am during term

Helpline: 1800 793 393

Mental Health Ireland – opened 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday

Call: (01) 284 1166

Email: info.mentalhealthireland.ie

Website: www.mentalhealthireland.ie

Figure 1

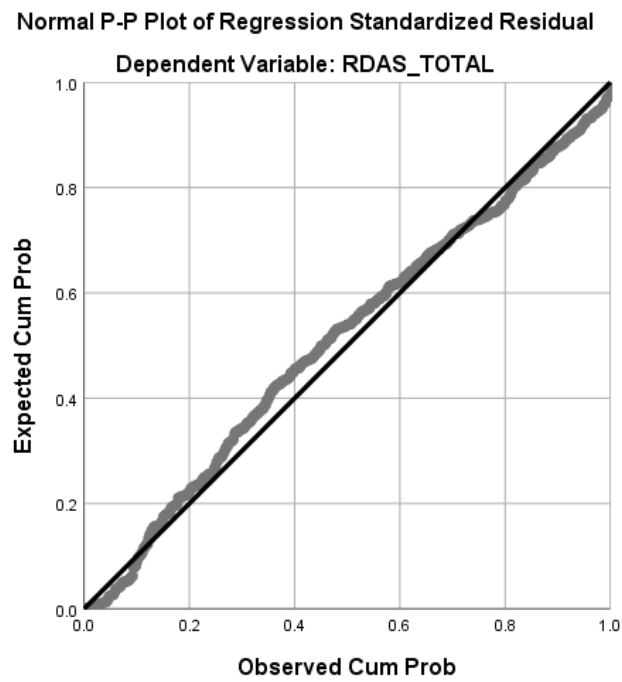


Figure 2

