

# The Effect of Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis on Parent-Child Conflict

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**Abstract:** The present study aims to investigate the effect of Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis on parent-child conflict. The research is done based on the quasi-experimental design. Population of the study included all the female high school students and their parents in district 4 of education, during the academic year of 2015 in Tehran, Iran. The participants were selected based on random clustering method. The related data were collected using the Parent-Child Relationship Survey (PCRS). Spss21 software was implemented for data analysis. Results of the study indicated that Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis (TA) was effective on resolving the parent-child conflict as 74 percent with as significance of  $p < 0.001$ .

**Key words:** parent-child conflict, Transactional Analysis (TA), Eric Berne

## Introduction:

Family is the first social environment which protects and supports the child. Children learn a type of interaction in this environment. Effective interaction leads to the prosperity of human identity and perfection and is the primary base of his interaction with others while non-effective interactions impede human prosperity and destroys the interactions. Thus, the basis for human life and felicity is formed by the interpersonal interactions (Wood, 1998, cited in DibajiFroushani, 2008).

Mothers are more sensitive to the needs of their teenage children and believe that they are more aware of the school affairs and social intercourse regardless of the teenagers' stage of development. Results have shown that mothers and sons have less interaction in early adolescence and if there is any interaction, it will be accompanied by strong opposition. The majority of opposition between mothers and sons is directly related to a the time when mothers and sons spend together, since mothers spend more time with the kids, they have more emotions upon them and the time they spend together leads to more conflicts (Harris, 2006).

The conflict among family members affects their unity and integrity and its severity would cause hypocrisy and aggression and militancy and eventually lead to the destruction and deterioration of family. Family which is disturbed under the effect of conflict between the husband and wife could have devastating effects on children's life and family which would emerge in the next few years as rebellion and defiance of social rules (Karami et al, 2012).

Parenting is one of the most important duties of the family. Children enter the adolescence from the beginning of the second decade of life. Adolescence is defined as the emergence of the biological, physical and social changes that take a while and is associated with expectations, behaviors and attitudes of the period among family members. Mothers are more sensitive to the needs of their teenage children and believe that they are more aware of the school affairs and social relations regardless of the teenagers' stage of development. Results have shown that mothers and sons have less interaction in early adolescence and if there is any interaction, it will be accompanied by strong opposition. The majority of opposition between mothers and sons is directly related to a the time when mothers and sons spend together, since mothers spend more time with the kids, they have more emotions upon them and the time they spend together leads to more conflicts (Harris, 2006). Conflicts and disputes between members of the family disturb the mental secure environment of the family and take the spirit of intimacy between the family members. It is causing problems for its members. The conflicts among the family members help to grow the interaction if it is dealt with properly. Otherwise, the continuation of the conflicts would harm the interaction among family members (Moradi and Sanaiee, 2006).

It is important to establish and maintain the interaction and one can find better ways to interact with children and solve the problems so that they can live happily together in a house (Bazul, 2000, cited in

BahramiMoaied, 2005). Conflict is often part of family life, and most families typically have inconsistent experiences during their life (Van Ryzin, Stromshak & Dishion, 2011). People typically experience conflicts when their needs, instincts and desires are not met (Kiralp, Dincyurk & Beidoglu, 2009). Values, expectations, unique rights and different experiences of each person cause conflict (Ali, N.M, 2010).

Conflicts in the family can be constructive or destructive. Conflict is destructive when it leads to depression of children and parents, social aggression, low self-esteem of the children and low adaptability of children at school (Ali, N.M, 2010). Furthermore, conflict can have a positive aspect too where it can help the family members to know each other and increase their awareness about different characteristics of others, recognize the interaction problems and empower their energy and stimulus to solve them (Keralp et al, 2009). Inefficient management of conflict in the family can lead to destructive effects. When the family members change the negative thoughts and experiences (such as conflicts, stress and inability to move forward) to the positive ones such as discussion and ability to move forward, they can manage the conflict correctly (Ali, N.M, 2010). Transactional Analysis is one of the methods to examine the efficiency of parent-child interaction. Transactional Analysis (TA) necessitates a planned and organized way to improve the quality of the parent-child interaction and then mother-son interaction. This theory is mostly applied as a method for studying interactions between individuals. It was first founded by Eric Berne in 1960s based on two ideas: first there are three ego states (child, parent, adult) and second that these ego states are behind each and every transaction. Transactional Analysis is a very common method of treatment and there have been many studies in this regard (Tudor, 2002). This method has applications for clinical, treatment and especially in interactions between individuals. This helps the patients by providing practical solutions so that they can better understand the relationships between them and their children and change them in a better way (Firouzbakht, 2005).

Transactional Analysis (TA) is a rational method which helps the person in analyzing his behavior and also in gaining knowledge and taking responsibility based on what happens at present (ShafiAbadi and Naseri, 2011). In fact the main task of the consultant in Transactional Analysis (TA) is to create some skills for those interested so that they can be led to a state to be able to analyze their behavior and see the results. According to Berne, the stages of changing behavior are: elimination of the inappropriate behavior, mental drain and clear description of interaction practices and finding new direction (Stewart I. Joines, 2007). Family therapists and couple therapists often report that poor communication is common among many families with problems. Poor interaction can lead to family problems including severe family conflicts, failure in solving the problems, lack of intimacy and emotional relations. Interaction is not only talking but it is listening to others so that we could understand what they say (Peterson and Grenn, 2009). The quality of life improves by learning correct ways of interaction and communication with others and applying the methods (Allen, 1998). If there is a bond established between two people with sincerity and creativity and free from fear, it can be created between four or six or one hundred or groups of people (Harris and Harris, 2004).

In the study by Turner, Richard and Sander (2007) parent education program about the number of local households in Australia led to the consistent growth and reduction of the problems in the family, and training parents helped them to take appropriate measures to deal with their children. Van Doorn et al (2008) studied the relationship between the methods of solving conflicts in juvenile delinquency and child-parent relationship. The results showed that in teenager-father relationship, avoidance patterns are causing juvenile delinquency and in teenager-mother relationship the non-constructive approach was related to delinquency in teenagers.

Kazeko (2006) in the study entitled as "the clinical and psychological status of TA application" concluded that they can help the clients to improve communication and efficiency of the family members in situations of family life through transactional analysis in a short time. Warner (2004) reported that major conflicts between mothers and daughters is related to time limit to return home, friends, cooperation in housework and homework.

In addition, the girls began to argue when they feel they have been criticized; Mothers believe their daughter argue with them to reject them. However, greater conflict is between teenagers and mom not dad and is common especially between mothers and daughters (Hill, 1988) (Monti Mayer et al., 1991, cited in Alison et al, 2004). Norman Bales (2000) believe that mother-daughter conflict is more common and frequent when daughter are at the age of 13 to 19.

Lawrence (2007) in a study examined the effect of interactional skills using transactional analysis on improving the interaction with clients. Results of the study showed that client became more aware of themselves and the interactions between individuals using this method. This awareness caused them to have more efficient interaction.

In a study conducted by Farhangi (2006) entitled as "the effect of group psychotherapy with Transactional Analysis (TA) on Stress Coping Strategies of Adolescents", it was concluded that this treatment method was effective on Stress Coping Strategies of Adolescents. Finally, since family is the most basic social formation and main element of society and also since having a healthy society relies on the family health which in turn depends on having mentally healthful people and proper interactions among family members (Nasr Esfahani et al, 2012).

Furthermore, since family is one of the most effective factor in personal growth of children (Saduk, Saduk and Caplan, 2003). The present study aims to investigate the effect of Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis on parent-child conflict. Thus, regarding the theories and review of literature, the present study examines the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis:** Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis is effective on reducing parent-child conflicts

### **Research Method**

The research is done based on the quasi-experimental design. Population of the study included all the female high school students and their parents in district 4 of education, during the academic year of 2015 in Tehran, Iran. The participants were selected based on random clustering method. For this purpose in district 4, the researcher referred to the Education Center and one high school was selected from among the high schools in this district. Then through the call, 20 mothers who had more conflicts with their teenage daughters based on Parent-Child Relationship Survey (PCRS) were selected from among the mothers who had registered. Then they were divided into two groups of control and experiment (n=10). They received research instrument as pre-test and post-test before and after group consultation, respectively.

Research instrument was Parent-Child Relationship Survey (PCRS). This scale contains 15 Likert-type items and examines three strategies of solving conflicts (reasoning, Verbal aggression, physical aggression or violence) between parents and children developed by Schwebel. Items indicate the behaviors shown by children at conflict with their parents. The items are based on 5-point Likert scale from very low to very high which show the incidence of each behavior. High score in each scale indicated the conflict. Five questions of the scale which measure the reasoning scales are reversely scored (questions 1 to 5) that is 5: very low, 4: low, 3: nearly, 2: high, 1: very high. Reliability of the scale for reasoning subscale was reported 0.42 to 0.76, 0.62 to 0.88 for verbal aggression and 0.42 to 0.94 for physical aggression. A lot of information was given for the construct validity of the scale (ThanaieeZaker, 2000). This scale was employed by Zaboli (2004), Moradi (2005) and Lotfi (2006) and reliability of the scale for the scale and its subscales was reported. Content validity of the scale was approved by some experts including Thanaiee (2004), NavabiNejad (2004) and Rahmati (2005) (Lotfi, 2006).

8 training session (1 session per week) was hold for the experiment group in order to teach Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis. First session was devoted to introducing, outlining the group rules (participation, attendance, etc). The purpose of this session was to determine and describe the objectives and regulations of the group, the member familiarity with each other and with the consultant, creating friendly environment, motivation and confidence in the group and emphasize on the importance of integrity in the group, to investigate the expectations of the group members and encouraging members to express concerns over the interaction.

The exercise conducted during this session was training how to speak and how to listen, respectively. In the second session, the skills for beginning the everyday conversation were trained. The purpose of this meeting was creating dynamic and better understanding in relations with others. Exercises trained during this session were role playing to show the relationships between members and their interaction in the family.

In third session the philosophical theory of Eric Berne was explained. The purpose of the session was acquaintance with the philosophical assumptions and their role in individual decisions. The training was conducted during the meeting included discussion on the influence of the context which was the child ego state in everyday decisions. Fourth session included acquaintance with ego states. Implementation of this meeting aimed at motivating for knowing the self and improving the relationships with others. The exercise practiced during this session was to identify child state and its types.

Fifth session was devoted to the parent state to create motivation for knowing the self and improving the relationships with others. The exercise practiced during this session was to identify parent state and its types.

Sixth session was devoted to the adult state to create motivation for knowing the self and improving the relationships with others. The exercise practiced during this session was to identify adult state, interaction, complementary, cross, hidden and angular relations.

In seventh session, life plan and instructions of each person's life are explained, the aim of which was familiarizing the members with a place of life and its role in interpersonal and intrapersonal relations. Training practiced in the meeting was identification of life plan, and defining the types caress and caress. Finally, in eighth session, the social behaviors such as withdrawal, activity, pastime, intimacy and customs were explained, the purpose of implementation was the member familiarity with social behavior, new decisions based on self-awareness. The exercises practiced during the session included a short training of listening and family plays. Data analysis was done using Spss software 21.

**Findings**

Results of data analysis showed that the mean score of the parent-child conflict of control group in pre-test in parent-child conflict variable was 42.15 and standard deviation was 12.41. Lowest score at this stage was 23 and highest score was 66. Further, the mean and standard deviation of group scores in post-test were 43.11 and 12.76 respectively. Lowest score at this stage was 24 and highest score was 67. The mean score of the parent-child conflict of the experiment test at pre-test in parent-child conflict variable was 40.65 and standard deviation was 14.65. Lowest score at this stage was 14 and highest score was 70. Further, the mean and standard deviation of group scores in post-test were 30.14 and 14.95 respectively. Lowest score at this stage was 6 and highest score was 59.

**Table 1.1 mean and standard deviation of the participants based on parent-child conflicts**

Group	Statistical index	Mean	Standard deviation	Min score	Max score
Control	Pre-test	42.15	12.14	23	66
	Post-test	43.11	12.76	24	67
Experiment	Pre-test	40.65	14.65	14	70
	Post-test	30.14	14.95	6	59

Hypothesis: Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis was effective on reducing the parent-child conflict. As shown in table 2, the mean square of the pre-test effect of transactional analysis variable was 63.103. The f value was 6.5. The effect ration (ETA) was obtained as 0.74. As the significance level of F was less than 0.05 but the sum of squares is 0.275 and since the significance level was obtained at 95% confidence level, the effect of training period of Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis on reducing the parent-child conflict has been approved.

**Table 2: Results of Covariance of control and experiment group in pre-test for total score of conflict**

Group	Statistics	df	MS	F	Sig.	Eta
Variance	Pre-test effect (covariate)	1	63.103	6.50	0.001	0.74
	Group	1	0.275	0.07	0.021	0.01

**Results**

The results of testing the hypothesis showed that 74% of the parent - child conflicts decreased using Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis. According to the results, it can be concluded that mothers who participated in the experimental group were more able to discuss their conflicts with their teenage daughters and take step to reduce them. These findings are in line with the results of the studies conducted by Davaiee (2002), Seif (2002), Kerns et al (1996) and Kazeko (2006). Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis deals with the relationships and problems within the person and his relation with others. And it is believed that if people replace the destructive, negative and degrading relationships with the healthy, sincere and honest relations with each other, they would be able to reduce the psychological pressures and enjoy their lives (Berne, 1974; translated by Fasih, 2009). It seems that mother-daughter conflict helps the daughter to know herself (Schneiderman and Streep, 2002). Dastjerdi et al (2004) in a study considered the factors such as pressure to enter university, care and control over the wrong doings, criticism of the coverage and hairdressing and appearance, preventing watching and listening to music and videos, the dispute regarding relationships with friends, preventing the achievement of various activities, control and communication with the opposite sex as the most important factors creating conflicts between teenagers and their parents.

Based on these findings, it can be said that Berne believes that human personality is organized in three ego states of child, parent and adult. These three states can be used in interactions (Chapman, 2007). The interaction of adult to adult, parent to parent and child to child is complementary and lead to the relationships where both parties feel they understand each other. As long as the relationship is complementary both parties are calm and have a good relationship. Conflict happens when the addressed ego state is not the one responding. According to Schneiderman and Streep (2007) daughters seek to grow in their conflicts with their mothers. Further, teenage girls despite being aware of the qualities of a good girl according to the mothers, are simply attracted to the features intolerable for mothers (Friday, translated by Zahedi, 2010).

The age of adolescence is the age of formal operations advent; the operations which allow the person to separate himself from the present. In this period, the perception dependent on objectivity which limits the child disappears and adolescents could move toward the possibilities and what is already absent. Also a feature for adolescents in this period is their ability to engage the adults who have illogical reasoning.

Many teachers and parents have experienced this frustrating feature. As the argument develops in teenagers, they use the same reasoning capacity that is observed in adults, although they have fewer schemas compared to adults (Piaget, 1963, cited in Wadsworth, translated by Yazdi and Fadardi, 2009).

Since adolescence is associated with problems in interpersonal and communication for him, more emphasis is on logical and healthy communication which can lead the adolescent to correct path of freeing excitement and emotions. During this period, the adolescent needs to solve their personal ambitions and to achieve a cohesive identity, tries to answer their own numerous questions and is highly susceptible to influence and identification with peers.

Parents and especially mothers, based on their important role, should support the adolescents and help them in gaining the experiences and required skills. Simultaneous control of all the variables involved in the research is very difficult and nearly impossible. The lack of cooperation of some mothers and doubts and concerns in the report of the actual amount conflict despite the emphasis on the principle of confidentiality and regarding the mother of one district as the research participants has made it difficult to generalize the results of the present study to other populations. These are the limitations of the study. Based on the results it is suggested that Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis is used simultaneously to solve the parents-child conflicts. It is also suggested to examine parent-child conflict reduction using other tests, larger samples and also other age groups of both girls and boys so that the generalizability of the results can be discussed.

#### Resources:

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