What Determines the Sibling Conflict Resolution Strategies of Adolescents? Parents, Siblings, or Temperamental Traits?

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Abstract

The main aim of the current study was to examine the predictors of conflict resolution strategies used by Turkish adolescent siblings when resolving conflicts with each other. A self-report questionnaire was used by older siblings (n = 84) and younger siblings (n = 81) who were closest in age. Older and younger siblings rated the conflict resolution strategies they used in resolving sibling conflicts. The results indicated that older siblings had lower levels of negative affect (β = -0.12, p < 0.01) and higher levels of depressive mood (β = 0.27, p < 0.01) when younger siblings were more likely to use solution-oriented strategies (β = 0.24, p < 0.01). Furthermore, older siblings with high levels of negative affect were more likely to use confronting strategies (β = 0.35, p < 0.01). The study concluded that temperamental traits, such as negative affect and depressive mood, can be used as predictors of sibling conflict resolution strategies.

The study was designed and conducted by researchers from the Department of Psychology, Middle East Technical University, ANKARA, TURKEY. The research was approved by the institutional review board of the university.

METHODS

Participants

The sample consisted of 165 Turkish female adolescents and their female (n = 84) or male (n = 81) younger sibling who was the closest in age. The average age of the siblings was 15.03 years (SD = 0.56) and the siblings participated in the study. Adolescents who had siblings were identified through the Adolescent Family Process Questionnaire (AFTPQ). In addition, while considering individual differences in the use of conflict resolution patterns in sibling conflicts, siblings were selected with the same age range (14-16 years) and gender.

In the current study, the participants were 84 older siblings aged 15.03 (SD = 0.56) and 81 younger siblings aged 15.04 (SD = 0.55), both female. Number of siblings were between 2 and 5 (M = 2.84, SD = 0.75) and the maximum age difference between the siblings were 4 years participated in the study. Adolescents who have siblings were identified as older and younger siblings. A total of 165 sibling dyads participated in the study. Adolescents and younger siblings filled the questionnaires at school, and older and younger siblings filled the questionnaires at home.

Instruments

- The Revised Conflict Resolution Patterns Scale (AFPM): The AFPM consists of 46 items designed to assess solution-oriented, control, and non-conflictual strategies. Older and younger siblings rated all their sibling conflict resolution strategies on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all to 5 = very often).
- The Early Adolescent Temperament Questionnaire Revised (EATQ-R): The EATQ-R measures temperament characteristics of children 9 to 15 years old. It consists of 177 items, which are divided into seven factors: emotional lability, negative affect, interpersonal sensitivity, shyness, impulsiveness, activity level, and attention problems. In the present study, the three negative affect factors (effortful control, negative affect, and depressive mood) were used to predict conflict resolution strategies.

Analysis

The data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis to determine the predictors of conflict resolution strategies used by older and younger siblings. In the first step, the variables were entered as control variables such as gender and age. In the second step, the variables were entered as maternal closeness, support, and conflict as parenting processes. In the third step, effortful control and negative affect were entered. In the fourth step, effortful control and negative affect were entered as parental variables. In the fifth step, the interactions between siblings were entered. The results showed that older siblings had lower levels of negative affect (β = -0.12, p < 0.01) and higher levels of depressive mood (β = 0.27, p < 0.01) when younger siblings were more likely to use solution-oriented strategies (β = 0.24, p < 0.01). Furthermore, older siblings with high levels of negative affect were more likely to use confronting strategies (β = 0.35, p < 0.01). The study concluded that temperamental traits, such as negative affect and depressive mood, can be used as predictors of sibling conflict resolution strategies.

DISCUSSION

In conclusion, the results indicated that older siblings had lower levels of negative affect and higher levels of depressive mood when younger siblings were more likely to use solution-oriented strategies. Furthermore, older siblings with high levels of negative affect were more likely to use confronting strategies. The study concluded that temperamental traits, such as negative affect and depressive mood, can be used as predictors of sibling conflict resolution strategies.