The Influence of Parent-Child Conflict Intensity and Frequency in Social-Cognitive Domains on the Psycho-Behavioural Consequences in Adolescents

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Abstract: There is an ongoing debate in scientific literature concerning what variables contribute the most to conflict incidence. The *purpose* of this present paper is to establish the conflict stimuli in the social-cognitive domains and to investigate the child outcomes measured by ASEBA, as the result of conflict intensity and frequency in the social-cognitive domains. In order to determine the social-cognitive domains we used the Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analysis as well as auto-reported questionnaires for data collection. The results indicated an effect pattern from low to high conflict intensity but not in conflict frequency. It seems that the continuation of the analysis in the social-cognitive domains did not bring any changes in previous child negative outcome patterns. These findings indicate that emotion-related variables have a high explanatory power in parent-adolescent conflict incidence.

Key words: conflict intensity; parent-child relationship; Social-Cognitive Domain Theory; internalizing and externalizing outcomes.

1. Theoretical introduction

1.1. Parent-Adolescent Conflict

Familial conflict is considered to be one of the main risk factors for resilient development in children (United States Public Health Service, 2001). Early research in the parent-adolescent (P-A) relationship, even from the beginning of the 20th century, emphasized the existence of conflict and its prominence in adolescence. Social conflict is defined as "*a perceived divergence of interest or a belief that the parties' current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously*" (Pruitt and Kim, 2004, pp. 7-8). In the Issues Checklist (Robin & Foster, 1989) P-A conflict was defined as a discussion with parents in the last four weeks. A qualitative study about P-A conflict on Romanian participants (Turliuc & Marici, 2013) found that conflict develops within the limits of the child's *developmental niche*. It can be about

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anything related to the child's or parent's activities. Conflicting themes are transitory, that is, conflicts on a specific theme appear as long as its thematic content presents interest for the actors of conflict, and conflict can be triggered by the type of practices parents imply, as well as by their style in implementing them.

Conflict in interpersonal relationships, in general and in P-A interactions, in particular, is *inevitable*, and it is a *certainty*; its presence does not necessarily mean a bad P-A relationship. Conflict itself is neither good nor bad. On the one hand, whether conflict is detrimental or beneficial to children depends on the valence of its consequences and overall evaluations. It is logically presumed that, when the sum of the negative consequences of P-A conflict is higher than the sum of the positive consequences, the conflict is *bad*, and when the sum of the positive consequences of P-A conflict is higher than the sum of the negative outcomes conflict is *good*. On the other hand, it is a fact that any conflict is perceived as a negative experience and consequently is associated with negative emotions. But in spite of all this it can still be a constructive conflict, if the overall benefits are positive.

However, an important question is what makes P-A conflict pathological or adaptive?

On the one hand, the social-cognitive domain theory (SCDT) sustains that most conflict in adolescence is normative; it is about mundane issues, of low intensity and serves the special purpose of negotiating child autonomy in the P-A, dyadic relationship. Autonomy is defined as a subjective perception of independence concerning personal decision making and parental control (Smetana, 1989).

SCDT is a theoretical framework used to evaluate the individuals' social judgments and reasoning referring to the understanding of rights, moral reasoning or welfare. Basically, the theory found that individuals manifest different patterns of understanding and judgment which are called domains. The *social-conventional reasoning* refers to consensually determined norms or to issues that have the potential of affecting the wellbeing, rights or fairness of others, while the *personal reasoning* refers to the personal preferences based on individuals' autonomous ability to choose.

In the first part of their childhood children are more dependent on their parents, but this decreases and in adolescence children pass through radical changes, which make them demand for more autonomy. This makes them claim more autonomy and independence from their parents over the self, and they do this by resisting parental control and authority. Their need of separation and individualization from their parents materializes in the fact that they first claim control over some issues which they consider to be in the domain of their personal jurisdiction. The explanation of the SCDT is far from being the only explanation. For example, P-A conflict incidence can be

the proof of some unmet needs; there is such a need for affection if the parent is authoritarian.

On the other hand, while some conflicts in P-A relationship are normative and serve the special function of gaining child autonomy, some conflicts might be a risk when it comes to child development. Yet, some researchers acknowledge that "*The conditions under which parent–adolescent conflicts are positive versus negative, related to adolescents' psychological functioning are as yet not clearly understood*" (Branje, van Doorn, van der Valk & Meeus, 2009). However, P-A conflict is associated with low self-esteem (Shek, 1997), depression (Dekovic´, 1999), conduct problems at school (Chiu, Shiue & Lee, 2002), antisocial behavior (Shek & Ma, 2001) or emotional distress (Shek, 1998).

1.2. Conflict Intensity and Psycho-Behavioral Outcomes

Conflict intensity has been less studied than conflict frequency. According to SCDT only a clinical minority from adolescents (those with conduct disorders or with oppositional behavior disorders) have serious conflicts with their parents, and they are in the moral domain (Smetana, Crean & Campione-Barr, 2005). These conflicts are more intense than those in the other domains (Smetana, 1995).

Emde and Easterbrook (1985) stated that emotions are *a sensitive barometer of the relationship between parents and children*; it seems that conflict intensity is *associated with negative outcomes rather* than conflict frequency. Parents and children who have developed a negative emotional climate (characterized by *criticism* and *disputes*) are less able to solve their conflicts constructively (García-Ruiz, et al. 2013; Rubenstein & Feldman, 1993) than those who do not. A close P-A relationship (characterized by good *communication* and *support*) is more likely to reach conflict resolution (García-Ruiz, et al. 2013; Steinberg, 1990) than a distant relationship. *In addition*, parents can maintain, facilitate conflict escalation or even induce and maintain a negative emotional climate in P-A relationship when they use inappropriate practices. For example, children who need more autonomy can be met with psychological aggression, corporal punishment or super protection, which all represent risk factors for the development of negative outcomes. Adolescents with authoritative parents talk calmer (lower conflict intensity) with their parents than adolescents with authoritarian parents; that is because authoritative parents grant their children autonomy, communicate efficiently and have more realistic expectations (Baumrind, 1971).

What is more, Kuang-Hui Yeh's research (2011) showed that specific emotions are associated with specific negative outcomes for adolescents, which means that certain emotions predict and explain better conflict

incidence. Thus, child resentment was the best mediator between P-A conflict and psycho-somatic symptoms, the mediation being partial. In case of both fathers and mothers resentment totally mediated the relationship between P-A conflict and social withdrawal. In the case of mothers, blame also totally mediated the same relationship. Moreover, as far as both mothers and fathers are concerned, anger and resentment totally mediated the relationship between P-A conflict and violent aggression. *Finally*, resentment mediated the relationship between P-A conflict and deviant behavior for mothers and fathers too. Emotions are good motivators as they lead to specific thematic actions, and once they are experienced by adolescents they might play a decisive role in whether conflict becomes constructive or destructive.

1.3. Conflict Frequency and Psycho-Behavioral Outcomes

Low to moderate levels of conflict frequency are neither good nor bad for child development. In fact, conflict could lead both to positive or negative outcomes (for example - clarification of different issues, gaining more autonomy, meeting needs ... or relationship break-ups, anxiety, internalizing and externalizing problems…). The developmental need for personal autonomy triggers adolescents to conflict with their parents more often, in order to meet their own needs, and, in turn, parents, despite acknowledging that they grant adolescents some degree of autonomy, actually give them less than their children expect (Smetana, 2011).

Although conflict intensifies in adolescence, when parents conflict too frequent, this may turn into a form of psychological control over the child's world and it can, consequently, lead to negative psycho-behavioral outcomes in children (Barber, Stolz & Olsen, 2005). Thus, when conflict reaches high frequency rates and, in addition it is accompanied by the use of ineffective parental conflict resolution strategies, such as blaming, accusing, verbal fighting with the hidden agenda to silent the children and force them to comply with the parental authoritarian requests, conflict could become a form of pathological behavioral control. This way, conflict reaches the limits of maladaptive control and evolves towards becoming a risk factor for resilient development. Here again, the mechanisms could also be explained by affective-related variables. The way children interpret conflicts make them less able self-control over personal emotions, negative interpretations representing, actually, major sources of stress for adolescents (Chan, 1998). The interpretations adolescents engage in determine their affective life (Kuang-Hui Yeh, 2011) and hence their resilient development.

2. Research Questions and Hypotheses

This present research is aimed at answering the following questions and hypothesis:

(Research question 1) What are the *stimuli* of P-A conflicts in different social-cognitive domains in the Romanian context?

(Research question 2) How is P-A conflict *intensity* associated with negative psycho-behavioral outcomes in different social-cognitive domains?

(Hypothesis 1) "Furious discussions, but not calm or moderate, will be positively associated with negative adolescent outcomes. "

(Hypothesis 2) "Furious discussions, but not calm or moderate, will be positively associated with negative adolescent outcomes in all domains."

(Research question 3) How is P-A conflict *frequency* associated with negative psycho-behavioral outcomes in different social-cognitive domains?

(Hypothesis 3) "There will be no association between conflict frequency and negative adolescent outcomes, regardless of the level of conflict frequency."

(Hypothesis 4) "Regardless of the level of conflict frequency, there will be no association between conflict frequency, and negative adolescent outcomes."

3. Research Methodology

This present research is a variable based research in child resilience. It is a quasi-experimental study, based on auto-reported standardized questionnaires applied to adolescents in groups.

3.1. Participants

The participants consisted of 360 adolescents, of which four were removed because their questionnaires missed data for multiple items. The children were adolescents, students in the 6th to the 10th grade, with an age mean of 15.1 years. All adolescents were screened for demographic characteristics in order to form a homogenous group of children. Both parents were alive, married and had lived together in the last two months. Neither the adolescents nor the parents suffered any psychological disorder, chronic disease or severe handicap that could have affected family life significantly. All the participants were Romanian, from Suceava. In addition, 79% of the participants had grades between 8 and 10, 19% between 7 and 6 and 2% lower than 6. 27% were the only child in the family, 43% had one more sibling, 13% had two siblings, 8% had three siblings, and 9% had more than four siblings. 93% were Orthodox or Romano-Catholic Christians, and

7% were of a different confessional orientation. 53% were the first child in the family, 39% were the second child to parents, 3% were either the third or the fourth child in the family, while 5% were born later. 7% finished less than eight grade levels, 35% of them did not finish high school, 37% of the parents graduated high school, 12% graduated from a faculty, 9% graduated with a master's or a doctoral degree.

3.2. Instruments

This present research used the following instruments:

1. *Conflict stimuli* – refer to a list of 18 stimuli of P-A conflict in the Romanian culture. Initially there were 21 items, items obtained based on qualitative research which had the aim of finding the P-A conflict stimuli in the Romanian context (see Turliuc and Marici, 2013). These items were also confirmed by the international literature (Smetana, 1989). The final list of 18 items was obtained after applying The Exploratory Factor Analysis and then the Confirmatory Factor Analysis which ascribed most presumed items (see the analyses below) to one domain or another. Consequently, we obtained 8 items for one domain which combined the moral and the conventional domain (called the moral/conventional domain), 5 items for the personal domain and 5 items for the friendship domain.
2. *Social-cognitive domain descriptors* – refer to four categories of descriptors of the social-cognitive domains used in this research, described by Smetana and Asquith (1994). They refer to the following domains: moral, conventional, personal and friendship.
3. *Conflict intensity* – was measured using one item, and the respondents were asked to indicate, on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (calm) to 5 (nervous), how intense their discussions with their parents were (Smetana and Asquith, 1994). Statistically, we divided adolescents' answers in three percentiles, creating three new variables. This division is still relative as we do not have any objective criterion to form three intensity categories, except for the answers of the adolescents. Thus we obtained three types of discussions between parents and adolescents which we tested against the child psychological and behavioral outcomes: calm, moderate and furious.
4. *Parental control over the social-cognitive domains* – this was assessed with one item, and the respondents were asked about the existence of parental rules/expectations. Their answers were measured on a Likert scale, adapted from Sorkhabi, (2010): 0 = no, 1 = sometimes, 2 = always.

5. *Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment*, (ASEBA, YSR), (Achenbach, 1991; Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1987) – We used the Romanian version of the instrument with 112 items coded on the following scale: 0 = false, 1 = somehow adequate/sometimes true, 2 = very true. This measure tests 2 broader dimensions – Internalizing and Externalizing problems and 8 other narrower dimensions: Anxious/Depressed (I), Withdrawn/Depressed (II), Somatic complaints (III), Social problems (IV), Thought problems (V), Attention problems (VI), Rule-Breaking Behaviour (VII), Aggressive Behaviour (VIII).

3.3. *Data Collection and Statistical Analysis*
The information was collected using auto-reported standardized questionnaires. The analyses were performed with SPSS, AMOS and Monte Carlo Syntax.

4. Results

Exploratory Factor Analysis for the Social-Cognitive Domains

In order to perform an exploratory factorial analysis and delimitate the social-cognitive domains we used the variable "parental rule setting" measured on a five-level Likert scale. The 21 conflict items were selected based on a pilot study with the Romanian participants (Turliuc & Marici, 2013) and on additional investigations. The final score for this variable was obtained by summing up the existing scores reported by the mothers and fathers. No scores were calculated for the cases where was quite a bit of missing data. Consequently the cases were temporarily removed from the database. Cases with little missing data were retained.

Initially we had 360 participants, but after the removal of cases with a large amount of missing data and the imputation of data for the cases with little missing data, we reached a number of 335 cases. Literature indicates that a factorial analysis of 300 cases would be a sufficient number for good results (Comrey & Lee, 1992). In order to find the best number of factors to be extracted we applied the Monte Carlo method (O'Connor, 2000), using a syntax in SPSS (see *Table 1*).

Table 1: Raw Data Eigenvalues, Mean and Percentile Random Data Eigenvalues

Root	Raw data	Means	Prcntyle
1,000	6,913	1,421	1,470
2,000	2,876	1,359	1,400
3,000	1,332	1,314	1,349

The Principal Component Analysis for the 335 cases, and 21 variables showed that the 1.34 Eigenvalue index for a 95 percentile is just above the Raw Eigenvalues index (1.33), and the mean (1.32) is just blow the raw Eigenvalues index. All three indices are above the accepted value of 1 for the Eigenvalues. Consequently we accepted a solution with 3 factors.

Then, we performed the Exploratory Factorial Analysis for the 21 variables in order to delimitate the three factors (see *Table 2*). We applied the Principal Component method, for a Fixed Number of Factors of three. We selected the Varimax Rotation, and the variables with loadings below 0.40 were removed.

Table 2: Hypothesis and Results Regarding Item Categorization in the Social-cognitive Domains as a Result of Factorial Analysis.

The Presumed Categorization of Items in the Social-Cognitive Domains	The Factorial Results of Categorization of Items in the Social-Cognitive Domains	Factorial Saturation M+F*
	FACTOR 1	
Moral		
1. Taking money from parents without permission.	Taking money from parents without permission.	.609
2. Lying to parents.	Lying to parents.	.751
3. Fighting with colleagues at school.	Fighting with colleagues at school.	.699
4. Not keeping promises to parents.	Not keeping promises to parents.	.627
5. Breaking/damaging goods belonging to friends or siblings.	---**	
Conventional		
6. Leaving home without communicating with the parents	Leaving home without communicating with the parents	.647
7. Eating with dirty hands (manners).	Eating with dirty hands (manners).	.623
8. Not doing chores instructed by parents.	---	
9. Answering rudely to parents.	Answering rudely to parents.	.613
10.Swearing.	Swearing.	.701
Personal	FACTOR 2	
11.How you dress.	How you dress.	.520
12.The music you listen to.	The music you listen to.	.606
13.Playing on the computer.	---	
14.Watching TV.	Watching TV.	.630

15. Your hair style.	Your hair style.	.518
16. The time you go to bed.	The time you go to bed.	.676
Friendship	*FACTOR 3*	
17. Staying overnight with a close friend.	Staying overnight with a close friend.	.562
18. Going out with a friend.	Going out with a friend.	.796
19. The decision to meet with your friends rather than doing something with your family.	The decision to meet with your friend rather than doing something with your family.	.519
20. Meeting a friend who your parents do not approve of.	Meeting a friend who your parents do not approve of.	.620
21. When you start meeting a friend of the opposite sex.	When you start meeting a friend of the opposite sex.	.796

Note: *M = Mother, F = Father, ** "—"The items did not have a loading value score of at least 0.40 to be retained.

Residual analysis confirmed that the factorial model with three factors is best. In order to proceed with the Confirmatory Factorial analysis, we applied an imputation procedure in SPSS, as AMOS 20 does not perform data analysis with missing data. Since we had three distinct domains, we performed a separate imputation for each domain in part using the EM method, the second best method after Multiple Imputation. Overall, we had 0.4% of missing data.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Establishing the Categorization of Items in the Social-cognitive Domains

We performed the CFA in AMOS for the three domains: moral/conventional, friendship and personal. The results are presented below (see *Graph 1*). The parameter comparison between the default and the covariance model indicates the necessity to draw of the covariance lines in AMOS (see *Table 3*).

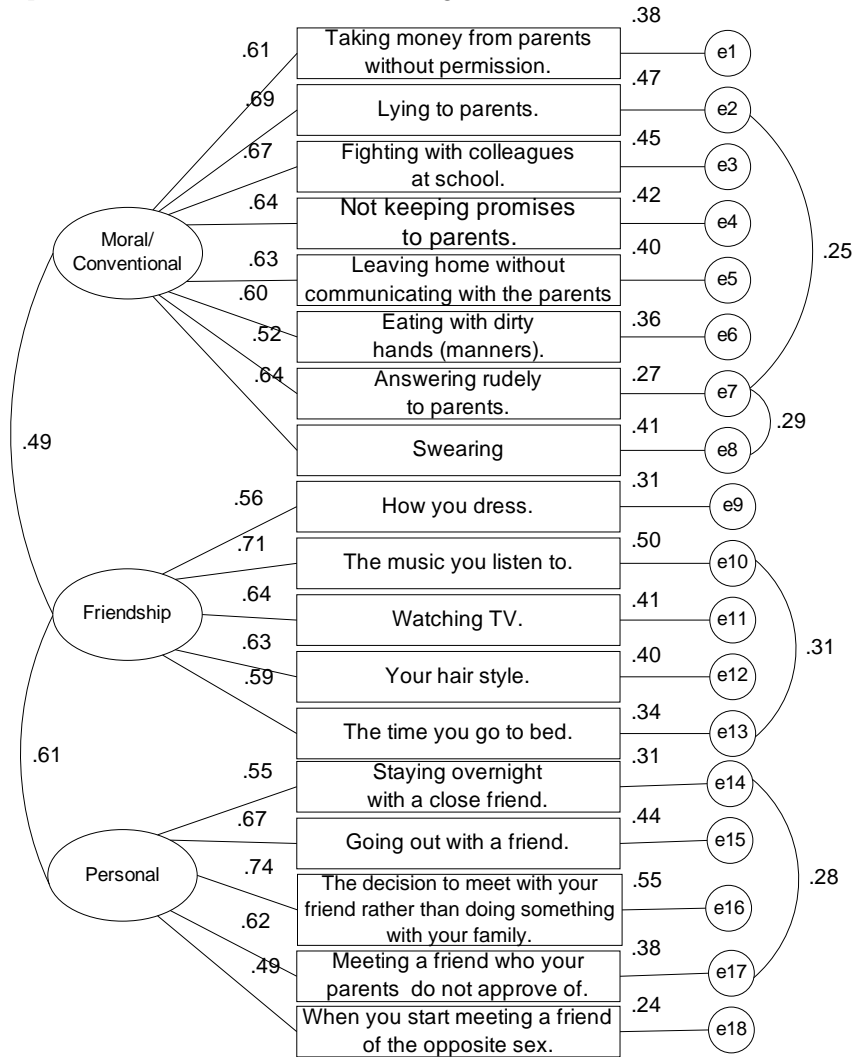*Graph 1:* CFA for the Three Social-Cognitive Domains.

Table 3: Model Improvement after Adding the Covariance Arrows

Model	df	χ^2	χ^2/df	p
1. *Default model*	133	274,10	2,06	0,00
2. *Model with covariances*	129	201,47	2,68	0,00

As a result, the database was prepared according to the 18 themes of parent-adolescent conflict resulting from the CFA. For the missing data in the conflict intensity variable the EM method was used in SPSS.

The Effect of Conflict Intensity on the Psycho-behavioral Consequences in Adolescents

Taking as a model the analysis performed by Tesser, Forehand, Brody and Long, (1989) we performed multiple linear regression analyses in order to investigate the effect of calm, moderate and furious discussions between parents and adolescents on child psychological and behavioral outcomes. As a result, we obtained the following findings (see *Table 4*):

Table 4: The Standardized Regression (**R**) and the Adjusted R-Squared (R^2_{adj}) Coefficients from the Simple Linear Regression Model.

Conflict intensity	calm	moderate	furious
		R/R^2_{adj}	
Anxious/Depressed			**.179****
			.05
Withdrawn/Depressed			**.141****
			.02
Somatic complaints			**.225****
			.05
Rule-Breaking Behaviour	**-.084**		**.122****
	.005		.01
Aggressive Behaviour	**-.091**		**.170****
	.007		.03
Attention problems	**-.113****		**.204****
	.011		.04
Thought problems	**-.135****		**.244****
	.017		.06
Social problems	**-.155****		**.226****
	.023		.05

Note: (1) ** $p < .001$, * $p < .01$, values with no asterisk $p < .05$. (2) The size effect is small in all situations, $R < .03$ (Cohen, 1988).

The results confirm the first hypothesis indicating that there is a positive association between negative adolescent outcomes and furious P-A discussions.

1.1. The Effect of Conflict Intensity in Different Social-cognitive Domains on the Psycho-behavioral Consequences in Adolescents

To continue our study, we investigated the effect of conflict intensity in the social-cognitive domains on the internalizing or externalizing outcomes as measured by ASEBA (see *Table 5*).

Table 5: The Standardized Regression (**R**) and the Adjusted R-Squared (R^2_{adj}) Coefficients from the Simple Linear Regression Model

Conflict Intensity	Moral/conventional domain			Friendship domain			Personal domain		
	calm	moderate	furious	calm	moderate	furious	calm	moderate	furious
Anxious/ Depressed						.222** .044			.221** .044
Withdrawn/ Depressed						.236** .051			.179* .027
Somatic complaints			.239** .052			.194* .033			.257** .061
Rule-Breaking Behaviour			.202* .036						
Aggressive Behaviour			.212* .040	-.141 .015		.148 .022			.156 .024
Attention problems			.166 .023	-.155 .019		.277** .073			.163 .022
Thought problems	-.175 .026	.259** .062				.260** .063			.215* .041
Social problems			.158 .020	-.175 .026		.247** .057	-.171 .024		.290** .080

Note: (1) ** p < .001, * p < .01, values with no asterisk p <.05, (2) the size effect is small in all situations, R < .03, (Cohen, 1988).

The results confirm the second hypothesis indicating that there is a positive association between negative adolescent outcomes and furious P-A discussions in all three domains.

The Effect of the Conflict Frequency on the Psycho-behavioral Consequences in Adolescents

The only significant values found were in case of the effect of low frequency on aggressive behavior: the standardized coefficient was .363 and the R^2_{adj}=.101, $p < 0.05$. As a result we can conclude that the third hypothesis is almost entirely confirmed if we take into account that the p value is just below .05, meaning that the real error is high, and this would be rather an invitation to retest the association (Fisher, 1966), and the effect size is medium.

The Effect of the Conflict Frequency in the Social-cognitive Domains on the Psycho-Behavioral Consequences in Adolescents

Finally, we investigated the effect of conflict frequency in the social-cognitive domains on the internalizing and externalizing problems of adolescents (see *Table 6*).

Table 6: The Standardized Regression (**R**) and the Adjusted R-Squared (R^2_{adj}) Coefficients from the Simple Linear Regression Models.

Conflict Frequency	Moral/Conventional Domain			Friendship domain			Personal domain		
	Low	moderate	high	low	moderate	high	low	moderate	high
Anxious/ Depressed					.238* .044	.240* .044			
Withdrawn/Depressed								.220* .037	
Somatic complaints					.242* .046				
Rule-Breaking Behaviour							.272* .063		
Aggressive Behaviour	.239* .045						.277* .066		

Note: (1) ** $p < .001$, * $p < .01$, values with no asterisk $p < .05$ (2) the size effect is small in all situations, $R < .03$ (Cohen, 1988).

In the case of three situations, attention problems, thought problems and social problems we did not find any significant associations with conflict frequency, regardless of social-cognitive domains or levels of conflict frequency. As a result, regarding the fourth hypothesis, we can state that we found some infrequent associations between the variables tested, thus infirming the hypothesis. However, it is worth noticing that the effect size is small, and the p value is close to 0.05 which again indicates a high, error rate association.

5. Discussion

The aim of this present study was, firstly, to establish the stimuli of parent-adolescent conflict in the Romanian cultural context and, then, to investigate the effect of conflict intensity and frequency in different social-cognitive domains on the resilient development in adolescents.

First of all, in order to answer the first research question, the Factorial analysis indicated that out of the initial 21 items, 3 items had loadings below .40, id est.: "*Not doing chores instructed by parents*" "*Breaking/damaging goods belonging to friends or siblings*" and "*Playing on the computer*". Consequently we retained 18 items, most of which also appear in the international literature. The Exploratory Factor Analysis indicated that the first factor included eight items, belonging to the moral and conventional domains, the second factor contained five items, which were assessed to the personal domain, and the friendship domain scale was made up of five items. The Confirmatory Factor Analysis showed that the items had loadings between .49 and .74. Model improvement procedures required drawing covariance lines in the moral/conventional domain between „*Lying parents*" and "*Answering rudely to parents*", and between "*Answering rudely to parents*" and "*Swearing*". In the friendship domain the covariance was between "*Going out with a friend*" and "*When you start meeting a friend of the opposite sex*" while in the personal domain there was an association between "*How you dress.*" and "*Your hair style*".

Secondly, regarding the second research question the results showed that there is an inversely proportional relationship between all negative outcomes and *less* furious talks in all situations, meaning that the calmer the adolescent, the less psycho-behavioral consequences he/she experiences. In addition, *moderate* levels of conflict intensity are not associated with any psycho-behavioral outcomes at a 0.05 significance level. Then, *high* levels of conflict are directly and positively associated with negative outcomes in adolescents. All these results were true whether we took the social-cognitive

domains into account or not, although there were some minor variations when we performed the splitting of items according to the social-cognitive domain categories. These results show that adolescents experience little change in their negative psych-behavioral outcomes when the social-cognitive domain variable is manipulated. Actually, as it has been predicted by previous studies, adolescents' resilience is directly influenced by manipulation regarding the level of conflict intensity, rather than by manipulation concerning the type of domain, in which the items are included.

Thirdly, these findings recall the communication styles. High levels of anger in P-A talks lead to personal negative outcomes, while an assertive style, which is more functional and effective in communication than the aggressive or passive styles, is not associated with internalizing or externalizing problems. These results emphasize that high levels of anger in P-A conflict are pathological, as long as they are associated with most negative conflict outcomes, as measured by ASEBA. When emotions are intense, conflict is very likely to erupt. These results confirm the findings of Tesser, Forehand, Brody and Long, (1989).

Finally, out of the 72 potential effects, we found significant effects only for seven associations among conflict frequency in the social-cognitive domains and child internalizing/externalizing problems. The significant associations were scarce, and no pattern was detected concerning the relationship between conflict frequency and psycho-behavioral outcomes. The SCDT focuses especially on conflict frequency when it comes to explaining conflict normativeness in adolescence. Yet, whether conflict is „good" or „bad" for adolescents it is finally determined by anger levels in P-A conversations, thus conflict intensity seems to be more powerful than conflict frequency in predicting child negative outcomes.

In addition, with only one exception, in all analyses the effect size was small. Yet there is a difference between the size of the p value, regarding the conflict frequency or intensity. In the case of conflict frequency the p value is almost invariable close to 0.05, while in case of conflict frequency there are more p values close to 0.001, which raises the question of certainty and error in analysis, as 0.05 p values have a real error rate of between 0.23% to 0.50% (Sellke, Bayarri, & Berger, 2001). Thus, although the hypotheses formulated regarding conflict frequency were infirmed, further investigation needs to be continued. A few studies have investigated the relationship between different levels of conflict intensity and frequency as well as adolescent negative outcomes in the social-cognitive domains. Yet some studies tend to report small effect sizes for conflict intensity or conflict frequency associations (Tesser, Forehand, Brody and Long, 1989; Laursen, 1998)

6. Conclusion

This is *the first research* which tested the item inclusion into the social-cognitive domains in the Romanian context and *one of the few studies* which is aimed at bringing light upon the conflict frequency-intensity debate, within the framework of SCDT. The limitations of this present research are: the auto-reported questionnaires which raise the question of data reliability and the long completion time required by the questionnaires.

Future research should continue to investigate the effect of conflict frequency and intensity on the internalizing or externalizing problems of adolescents in the context of different theoretical frameworks. For example, what is the role of other emotion-related variables such as conflict resolution styles, level of stress or other emotions, except for anger, in predicting a child's lower levels of resilience? Are these results maintained when conflict actors have different conflict resolution abilities or when different conflict interpretations are implied? Moreover, future studies should investigate these associations in the context of SCDT, the model of Darling and Steinberg (1993) or the theory of socialization of Baumrind (1971).

These present findings have *practical implications* for conflict resolution practices as parents are considered to be people who need to permanently "develop … parenting skills, under new ideologies and undergo various forms of learning these roles" (Cojocaru & Cojocaru, 2011). The results also bring further evidence concerning the debate between what influences most conflict incidence, parenting styles and practices or the control over the personal domain of adolescents.

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