

## University Students' Observations of Interparental Conflict: A Descriptive Qualitative Study

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### Abstract

Interparental conflict is a common aspect of family life and plays a significant role in shaping family climate. This study aims to explore the reasons behind interparental conflict based on the observations of university students. A descriptive qualitative research design was followed in the study. The participants consisted of 35 undergraduate students, and data were collected via written responses to an open-ended question asking students to describe the main conflicts they observed between their parents. The data were analyzed using inductive thematic analysis. As a result of the analysis, six main themes reflecting students' observations of interparental conflict were reached: economic issues, power and control, relational difficulties, parenting, family-of-origin-related conflicts, and daily life-related conflicts. Among the main themes, economic issues were represented by the subthemes of financial strain and financial management, and relational difficulties by communication problems and emotional conflicts. Overall, the findings suggest that university students perceive parental conflict not as isolated disagreements but as a multidimensional and continuous relational phenomenon, with many factors playing active roles.

**Keywords:** Interparental Conflict, University Students, Family Dynamics, Emerging Adulthood, Qualitative Study

### Introduction

Interparental conflict is considered a common feature of family life and affects the functioning of the family system and the well-being of its members. According to the framework of family systems theory, the family is seen as a dynamic unit in which subsystems such as the marital subsystem and parent-child subsystem are interconnected. Therefore, tension or dissonance in one subsystem often affects the others (Larsen et al., 2024; Mastrotheodoros et al., 2022). While minor disagreements are seen as a natural part of marital relationships, interparental conflict becomes critical for family climate when characterized by certain dimensions such as frequency, intensity, form of expression, and degree of resolution (Ran et al., 2021). In this context, the literature makes a distinction between two types of conflict, which include constructive conflict that requires mutual respect and calm dialogue to reach solutions and destructive conflict, which creates hostility and aggressive behavior without reaching any resolution (Kopystynska et al., 2022; Hopson et al., 2026).

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Several theoretical models help to explain how interparental conflict affects family relationships. For example, the spillover hypothesis explains that negative emotions generated within the marital relationship often extend into the parent–child relationship, and this causes reduced parental warmth and harsh parenting behaviors (Sayıl et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2022). Similarly, the Family Stress Model emphasizes that economic strain and external stressors increase parental distress, which then increases conflict between spouses (Lee et al., 2023). However, the impact of these conflicts is not only defined by their occurrence. The nature of the interactions observed in the home also has a significant role. While destructive tactics like verbal aggression cause risks to emotional security, constructive conflict resolution can serve as a model for healthy emotional regulation and social competence (Jomon & Nilanjana, 2025).

A key point in understanding the effect of interparental conflict is the role of children as individuals who actively observe and interpret their parents' interactions. According to the cognitive-contextual framework, the effects of conflict on young people are generally mediated by their cognitive appraisals and perceptions of the event (Jiang et al., 2025; Altınok et al., 2017). Furthermore, Emotional Security Theory supposes that maintaining a sense of safety in the family is an important goal for children. They usually monitor interparental interactions to assess potential threats to family stability (López-Larrosa et al., 2019; Warmuth et al., 2024). Present research mostly studies children and adolescents, but emerging adulthood stands as its own developmental stage because they can better understand family relationships through their cognitive development (Altınok et al., 2017; Kumar & Mattanah, 2018).

University students, as emerging adults, continue to experience a strong need to protect their parents' relationship, which drives them to resolve any conflicts between their parents through their studies at university while being away from their family home. (Warmuth et al., 2024). Moreover, it is indicated that the adverse effects of interparental conflict, such as depressive symptoms and loneliness, persist into emerging adulthood, influencing the students' own interpersonal functioning and romantic competence (Kumar & Mattanah, 2018; Çoban & Turan, 2023). Retrospectively, these young adults are able to reflect on family of origin adversity, which has been shown to have long-term implications for their own adult relationships and marital satisfaction (Wikle et al., 2024). Therefore, exploring how university students describe the interparental conflicts they observe is also essential for understanding the impact of family dynamics on their development.

Although the literature examines interparental conflict from various angles, significant gaps remain in how emerging adults conceptualize these experiences beyond predetermined categories. Most of the studies rely on quantitative measures to assess frequency, intensity, and resolution (Altınok et al., 2017). While quantitative instruments have provided valuable insights on the correlation between conflict dimensions and outcomes like anxiety or aggression (Jiang et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2022), complementing these approaches with participants' own observations may offer additional perspectives.

Furthermore, there is a need to move beyond broad categorizations of conflict as merely "constructive" or "destructive" and examine the specific behaviors as significant in interparental conflict. Recently, the necessity of methodological fine-tuning to capture the complexity of conflict management strategies, including covert behaviors such as withdrawal or triangulation, has been emphasized (Kopystynska et al., 2022; Kong et al., 2024). Addressing this gap is critical, as the specific ways in which emerging adults

retrospectively describe and categorize their parents' conflicts may reveal insights into the transmission of family dynamics and the "permeability" of family boundaries (Mastrotheodoros et al., 2022; Abreu-Afonso et al., 2022).

In this context, the study aims to identify and describe the main reasons for interparental conflict observed by university students in their parents' relationships. Accordingly, the main research question of the study is: *"What types of interparental conflicts do university students report observing between their parents?"* This research attempts to contribute to the literature by providing an experience-based understanding of interparental conflict as perceived by university students.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

A qualitative descriptive design was employed in the present study. Qualitative descriptive research design aims to provide a summary of events or experiences, written in the everyday terms of the people who experienced them (Sandelowski, 2000). Unlike document analysis, which examines pre-existing written materials, this study is based on participants' written responses collected specifically for research purposes, reflecting individuals' subjective observations rather than existing documents. This design enables the systematic description of recurring interparental conflict reasons identified across participants' brief written responses, without theoretical interpretations beyond the data itself.

### **Participants**

Participants consisted of 35 undergraduate university students enrolled in the Guidance and Psychological Counseling undergraduate program at a private university in Türkiye. All participants were registered in the same course, during which the data were collected as part of a classroom-based activity. The sample was selected using convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is a nonprobability sampling method in which participants are selected based on accessibility and willingness to participate (Etikan et al., 2016). Participation in the research was voluntary, and responses were collected anonymously. No demographic information, such as age, gender, or year of study were collected, as the aim of the study was to map commonly observed interparental conflict reasons.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected through a classroom-based activity conducted during the Family Counseling course. Before collecting data, students were informed that their responses would be used for scientific research purposes. It was also emphasized that participation would not affect course requirements or evaluation, and responses were collected anonymously without any identifying information. Then, a single open-ended question was asked to the participants: *"What are the main reasons for conflict that you have observed between your parents?"* Students wrote their brief responses on a blank sheet of paper. Finally, the answer sheets were collected by the researcher, and the data collection was completed.

## Data Analysis

The data were analyzed by using inductive thematic analysis. Inductive thematic analysis is an approach in which the codes emerge from the data, rather than being guided by predefined theories or the researcher's prior assumptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). All responses were transferred into MAXQDA software for systematic coding. The data were read repeatedly to ensure familiarity, and initial codes were generated directly from explicitly stated conflict reasons. After coding was performed, themes and sub-themes were reached based on similar codes. To enhance trustworthiness, the data and coding structure were reviewed repeatedly throughout the analysis process to ensure consistency across codes, subthemes, and themes.

## Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Ibn Haldun University (Decision No: 2025/08-06; Date of approval: 18 September 2025). Students were informed about the purpose of the study and the use of their responses for scientific research. Informed consent was obtained implicitly through voluntary participation after this information was provided. Responses were collected anonymously, and no identifying information was requested. All data were handled confidentially and used solely for research purposes.

## Findings

The analysis revealed six main themes. The themes, sub-themes, sample codes, and frequencies of codes for each theme are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*The Themes, Sub-Themes, Sample Codes, and Frequencies of Codes for Each Theme*

| Themes                             | Subthemes                                      | Sample codes                                                                                                                             | <i>f</i> |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Economic issues                    | Financial strain;<br>Financial management      | financial hardship; spending and budget management; extravagance; economic expectations                                                  | 26       |
| Power and control                  | —                                              | authority and dominance in decision-making; violation and restriction of personal space; interference in life and decisions              | 25       |
| Relational difficulties            | Communication problems;<br>Emotional conflicts | lack of communication; unmet emotional needs; insecurity and deception; lack of respect; constant criticism                              | 50       |
| Parenting                          | —                                              | differences in child-rearing attitudes; conflicts between discipline and tolerance; sharing of childcare responsibilities;               | 11       |
| Family-of-origin-related conflicts | —                                              | interference of extended families in relationships; relative expectations; mother-in-law/relative tensions; comparing families           | 25       |
| Daily life-related conflicts       | —                                              | household chores and responsibilities division; health, nutrition, and habits; social activities; conflicts between cleanliness/hygiene. | 32       |

Emerged themes were economic issues, power and control, relational difficulties, parenting, family-of-origin conflicts, and daily life-related conflicts. Under the themes of economic issues (financial strain and financial management), relational difficulties (communication problems and emotional conflicts), two sub-themes were identified for each. The remaining themes did not yield distinct subthemes. In the following parts of the section, each theme and sub-theme are explained with excerpts of the participants' written responses.

### **Economic Issues**

Economic issues emerged as a theme of interparental conflict in students' observations. Participants frequently described tensions arising from financial conditions within the family, indicating that economic matters constituted a recurring source of disagreement between parents. These conflicts were observed to arise both from material hardship and from different approaches to the management, use of financial resources, and expectations. Financial strain and financial management emerged as two sub-themes under this theme.

#### **Financial Strain**

Financial strain refers to conflicts related to limited economic resources and difficulties in meeting needs. Participants reported that insufficient income or financial instability created persistent tension between parents. In several accounts, economic hardship was described as a main factor that intensified other conflicts within the family. For example, one student mentioned, *"Most of their conflicts are actually caused by financial problems,"* while another noted that *"When things are not going well economically, conflicts between my parents increase."* Furthermore, expecting one spouse to meet their economic needs is cited as a cause of conflict, as mentioned: *"The expectation that men should meet their wives' economic needs leads to conflict between spouses."*

#### **Financial Management**

Students also observed conflicts related to the management and control of financial resources. These conflicts included disagreements about spending habits, allocation of household income, and perceptions of financial responsibility. Several students described continuous disputes regarding how money should be spent or who should control financial decisions. For instance, it is stated that, *"My father is extravagant and not thrifty. He's not very good at managing money. My mother is thriftier and tries to live a more planned life. This causes serious tension between them."* Another student expressed, *"They often argue about money. I've never seen my father and mother agree on this. My father thinks my mother is very extravagant. My mother thinks my father is the kind of man who might have pockets in his shroud."* Conflicts also increased when one parent controlled financial resources, as explained: *"When my mother wants to buy something for the house, my father refuses, which leads to arguments."* or *"conflicts arise because the money in the account is held by only one person."*

### **Power and Control**

Power and control were another theme identified as a recurring domain. Students often addressed situations in which one parent was perceived as having greater authority in the relationship and using this authority in ways that created intensity. These conflicts were mostly linked to decision-making processes, daily household arrangements, and limits placed on the other parent's autonomy. Many students described conflicts arising when one parent, most frequently the father, took a dominant role in family decisions without consulting his spouse. For example, one student stated, *"There is a lot of conflict when decisions about the future are made. My father usually dominates and wants his decisions to be followed."* Another student similarly mentioned that, *"My father never consulted my mother about the things he did, or even if he did, he always did things his own way."* Conflicts related to control were also observed in everyday behaviors and personal boundaries. Some students reported that restrictions placed on one parent's actions or choices led to frequent arguments. Expressions like *"My father tries to control many aspects of my mother's daily life,"* and *"My father interfering with my mom's clothing choices or the people she meets becomes a source of conflict,"* show that condition. In addition, students mentioned conflicts related to gendered expectations and unequal responsibilities between the parents. Some statements reflected tension when one parent imposed expectations regarding roles or responsibilities, such as *"My father believes he knows everything, and my mother feels overwhelmed by this,"* or *"One parent puts all household responsibilities on the other, which causes constant arguments."* These dynamics were often perceived as reinforcing imbalances of power within the relationship.

### **Relational Difficulties**

Relational difficulties were another issue that related to students' perceptions of interparental conflict. Students observed conflicts about how the parents communicated with each other, as well as how they related on an emotional level over time. Relational difficulties included different domains such as lack of communication, unmet emotional needs, insecurity and deception, or lack of respect. Two subthemes occurred in relational difficulties: communication problems and emotional issues.

### **Communication Problems**

Communication problems included frequent misunderstandings, ineffective communication styles, and recurring arguments over both minor and important issues. Students often noted that parents struggled to convey their thoughts and feelings clearly, which leads to misinterpretations that escalated into conflict. For example, the accounts, such as *"What my mother says is often misunderstood by my father, or he understands or interprets what she didn't mean to say in different ways,"* or *"My parents have communication problems because they interpret each other's words differently,"* explain this situation. Students emphasized a blaming style of communication, where discussions quickly turned into mutual accusations. As one student noted, *"No matter what the topic is, it turns into 'you did this' or 'you are responsible.'" Frequent arguing was also highlighted as a common pattern, describing the situation such as "They argue all the time, even over very small things."* Miscommunication was sometimes described as persistent rather than situational. One student stated, *"There is a general communication breakdown between my parents,"* while another stated, *"They cannot healthily talk to each other."* These suggest that communication problems were experienced as an ongoing source of conflict within the relationship.

### **Emotional Conflicts**

Emotional conflicts refer to tensions related to emotional closeness, mutual care, and the quality of the emotional bond between parents. Students described conflicts that were caused by feelings of emotional neglect, lack of appreciation, and a gradual weakening of affection within the relationship. These conflicts were not necessarily related to specific events. On the contrary, they were often perceived as ongoing emotional conditions shaping parents' interactions over time. Some students noted that one parent, mostly the mother, felt emotionally ignored or insufficiently valued in the relationship. This problem was reflected in statements such as *"My mother complains about my father's indifference,"* and *"There is a sense of emotional neglect between my parents."* Emotional conflicts were also associated with perceptions of declining affection, as students described situations where parents no longer expressed warmth toward one another. For example, a student referred to *"I can see a loss of love and respect between my parents."* Students observed that unresolved emotional tensions contributed to increasing distance between parents, making everyday interactions more strained.

### **Parenting**

Parenting also emerged as a significant theme in students' accounts of interparental conflict. Students described conflicts that were directly related to how parents approached their roles as caregivers and how responsibilities and challenges associated with children affected the parental relationship. The observations indicated that disagreements related to parenting often served as a central source of conflict between parents. Students addressed disagreements in which one parent was perceived as more tolerant or permissive, while the other adopted a more authoritarian approach. These differing attitudes toward child-rearing were often described as triggering arguments between parents. For example, one student stated, *"My mother is more tolerant toward the children, while my father is stricter, and this causes conflict between them."* Another student similarly noted, *"They argue because one parent gives more freedom to the children, while the other does not approve."* In some accounts, students observed that parents openly criticized each other's parenting approaches, which further intensified conflict. It was expressed as: *"They often argue about how the children should be raised,"* also emphasizing that differences in parenting style were experienced as constant. Students described interparental tensions related to children's relationships with each other, children's personal problems, and the overall burden of parenting. These stressors were often perceived as overwhelming and were reported to increase the frequency of conflicts between parents. To exemplify, one student stated, *"They argue because of problems involving the children."* Some students also mentioned that conflicts intensified when parents blamed each other for child-related difficulties. As reflected in one account, *"They argue because they hold each other responsible for the children's problems."* These observations show that stress associated with children functioned as a conflict within the parental relationship.

### **Family-of-origin-related Conflicts**

Conflicts related to family-of-origin refer to issues shaped by parents' attitudes toward their own families and their spouses' families, and the involvement of third persons (e.g., the in-laws, or relatives) in the relationship. Students frequently described conflicts that parents criticized, compared, or expressed dissatisfaction with each other's families. Some students reported that parents openly criticized each other's families, which led to recurring arguments. For example, one student stated, *"My*

*father does not like my mother's family and constantly makes remarks about them,"* and another similar account, *"My mother criticizes my father's family, and this causes conflict between them."* In some notes, students observed that both parents engaged in mutual criticism, as reflected in statements such as *"They argue because they do not approve of each other's families."* Comparisons between families were also commonly mentioned. Students described situations in which parents compared their families' backgrounds, behaviors, or values, which causes conflict in the relationship. One student explained, *"They are always competing over whose family is better,"* while another stated, *"My parents argue because they compare their families to each other."* In addition to criticism and comparisons, students described conflicts caused by the involvement of third persons, such as parents or close relatives, in the marital relationship. Some students claimed that relatives intervened in family matters or influenced parental decisions. As one student expressed, *"Problems with relatives turn into conflicts between my parents,"* while another stated, *"Family members interfere in their relationship, and this causes arguments."* These observations draw attention to the fact that third-party involvement was perceived as a disruptive factor in the parental relationship.

### **Daily life-related conflicts**

Conflicts related to daily life describe arguments arising from daily routines, habits, and practical arrangements within the household. Students described conflicts that were based on ordinary daily practices. These issues were perceived as frequent sources of disagreement between parents. Such conflicts mostly emerged around household responsibilities, daily habits, personal routines, and differences in lifestyle preferences. Students noted conflicts because of disagreements over household order, cleanliness, and daily responsibilities. For example, one student stated, *"Conflicts arise because my father does not tidy up his belongings,"* and another addressed, *"There are arguments when household chores are not done."* Similarly, issues related to domestic routines were mentioned, as reflected in the statement: *"They argue about household order and responsibilities."* Daily habits and personal routines were also described as sources of conflict. Students reported disagreements, such as eating habits, television use, and time spent at home or outside. One student explained, *"My father loves watching TV. While watching TV, he disconnects from the world and sometimes refuses to eat dinner in the kitchen. My mother doesn't want him to eat in the living room because she thinks it smells of food, so there's a conflict between them."* Another stated, *"They argue because my father spends too much time outside the house."* Differences in lifestyle preferences, such as how leisure time should be spent, were perceived as contributing to interparental conflicts. Health-related daily behaviors were another area of conflict. Some students mentioned arguments related to smoking, unhealthy eating, or neglect of health concerns. For instance, students referred to *"smoking inside the house despite health problems," "refusing to go to the doctor,"* and *"My father's insensitivity to health issues makes my mother resentful. His lack of sufficient attention to my mother's illnesses is causing problems between them,"* shows that health-related issues occurred as behaviors that triggered conflicts between parents.

### **Discussion**

This study aims to explore interparental conflict reasons based on the university students' observations through a descriptive qualitative approach, identifying the specific interparental conflict dynamics that

university students categorize as significant in their families. The findings reveal that students observe interparental conflict as six themes: economic issues, power and control, relational difficulties, parenting, family-of-origin issues, and daily-life related conflicts. These themes emphasize that university students explain interparental conflict as shaped by multidimensional dynamics.

Economic problems in the students' comments strongly fit with the Family Stress Model, which claims that financial difficulties create pressure on parents, and this causes tension (Lee et al., 2023). Our findings show that students are aware of the material reality of economic hardship and behavioral conflict emerging from resource allocation, by distinguishing between financial strain and financial management. This distinction supports the findings of Lee et al. (2023), which indicate that financial hardship exacerbates destructive interparental conflict through parents' depressive symptoms. Similarly, in a longitudinal study conducted with Turkish families, Çakmak and Güre (2020) demonstrated that perceived economic strain and financial concerns were significant predictors of conflict between parents, including reduced mutual agreement and increased psychological aggression. Furthermore, the students' observation that a parent's spending habits frequently trigger conflict supports the idea that financial disagreements are not just about the amount of money available, but also about the financial management (e.g., consumption behaviors, allocation of household income) (Sağkal & Türnüklü, 2017).

The theme of power and control indicates that students perceive interparental conflict as a manifestation of dominance and pressure in the marital relationship. Especially, students often identified one-sided decision-making (e.g., interference with clothing choices or social life). The observations about this theme are parallel to what the literature defines as destructive conflict, characterized by dominance, coercion, and the absence of mutual negotiation (Kopystynska et al., 2022). Students' references to behaviors such as making decisions without consulting the spouse or insisting on one's own way can be interpreted as reflecting relational patterns characterized by limited validation and emotional responsiveness. Previous research suggests that such communication patterns are associated with lower relationship quality and reduced marital satisfaction (Abreu-Afonso et al., 2022). Moreover, these types of conflicts were often described as directed from father to mother, pointing to the influence of traditional gender roles on conflict dynamics. This condition can be seen in the Turkish context, for example, a study conducted with Turkish women indicates that relational tension may increase when traditional gender roles and unequal power arrangements within the family are questioned rather than accepted (Gürsoy Çuhadar, 2024). Nevertheless, because demographic data were not collected, these interpretations of gender-related power dynamics remain limited to participants' subjective accounts. In addition to this, students' accounts reflect interaction patterns resembling the demand-withdraw cycle, in which one parent applies pressure while the other responds with compliance or emotional withdrawal (Papp et al., 2009). Such persistent power struggles were interpreted by students as relational problems that undermine emotional security within the family system (Kopystynska et al., 2022).

Relational difficulties, which cover communication problems and emotional conflicts, occurred as a core domain of interparental conflict. This finding supports the view that the quality of the interparental relationship is shaped by parents' emotional availability and their capacity to express emotions in the relationship (Abreu-Afonso et al., 2022). Accordingly, students' references to emotional neglect and

indifference are consistent with research showing that withdrawal, disengagement, and disorganized conflict patterns represent distinct and equally harmful forms of destructive interparental conflict (Papp et al., 2009; Davies et al., 2021). The persistence of these relational difficulties suggests that children are particularly sensitive to the gradual erosion of affection, a process that has been shown to contribute to a negative emotional climate within the family system (Mastrotheodoros et al., 2022). In this regard, communication problems, such as misinterpretation of messages and mismatches in needs for emotional closeness, have been identified as factors that diminish positive spousal interactions and intensify conflict (Cummings & Davies, 2014). Moreover, relational dynamics characterized by unmet emotional expectations, lack of trust, and individual personality characteristics, such as neuroticism, have been shown to further undermine relationship functioning (Madukwe et al., 2025). These findings support the relational and emotional conflict patterns identified in our study, highlighting how emotional dissatisfaction and interpersonal vulnerabilities contribute to the continuity of interparental conflict and have a negative impact on the health of the marital relationship.

The emergence of parenting as a conflict theme provides evidence for the spillover hypothesis, where tension in the marital dyad transfers to the parent-child subsystem (Kopystynska et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2023). It is indicated that differences in parenting approaches, childcare responsibilities, and involvement in children's education are central sources of interparental conflict (Tolla, 2022). Furthermore, the subthemes of parenting style and child-related stress show that children are also the subject of interparental conflict. Parenting styles and child-related problems described in our findings are parallel with the literature showing that interparental conflict is associated with disruptions in parenting processes and parent-child interactions (Jiang et al., 2025). Students' observations that parents blame each other for children's problems suggest forms of child involvement in interparental conflict. Such patterns can be understood in light of processes described in the literature as triangulation, where children become indirectly drawn into unresolved parental tensions (Kopystynska et al., 2022; Holt et al., 2024).

Conflicts related to family-of-origin is another source of interparental problems. Students frequently described situations in which criticism, comparison, and third-person involvement, particularly from extended family members, entered the marital relationship and disrupted the parental dyad. These observations suggest blurred boundaries between the marital relationship and families of origin, a pattern that has been widely associated with increased marital strain, and even with divorce (Kaymakci et al., 2025). Such conflicts also placed parents in positions of divided loyalty, intensifying emotional strain within the relationship. In accordance with this interpretation, Singh and Shanbhag (2025) indicate that excessive parental involvement can foster resentment, reduce perceived privacy, and heighten spousal conflict, especially when one spouse feels overshadowed or unsupported in the marriage. Moreover, discord between spouses regarding closeness to in-laws has been shown to predict marital instability, emphasizing the importance of shared expectations and boundary negotiation in maintaining marital harmony (Fiori et al., 2020).

Our findings demonstrate that daily-life and household activities and their associated practical arrangements create conditions that lead to interparental conflicts. Students reported that arguments arose around household order, cleanliness, and the division of responsibilities, which is consistent with previous research identifying household chores as common motives for marital conflict and as factors

related to relationship quality (Papp et al., 2009; Sağkal & Türnüklü, 2017; Wagner et al., 2019). Parallel to our findings, it is explored that the time couples spend together and their individual differences lead to major conflicts in their marital relationships (Wagner et al., 2019). In general, these demonstrate that interparental conflicts develop through battles over daily routine activities, which serve as key elements.

### **Limitations**

This study has some limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the sample consisted of 35 students from a university, limiting the transferability of the findings to more diverse populations. Second, data were collected through brief written responses to a single open-ended question, which restricted the depth and contextual richness that could be achieved through in-depth or semi-structured interviews. In addition, the data relied on students' retrospective and subjective accounts of interparental conflict, which may be shaped by recall bias, by the students' current emotional relationships with their parents, and by their developmental position as emerging adults. Their increased cognitive maturity and relative distance from the family environment during university years may have influenced how they retrospectively interpreted and evaluated interparental conflicts. Finally, the study provides a general overview of interparental conflict but does not address the frequency or intensity of these conflicts. Future research should consider larger and more diverse samples, employ in-depth qualitative or mixed-method designs, and adopt longitudinal approaches to better understand how conflict dynamics evolve and influence emerging adults' emotional and relational development.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

This study examined interparental conflict from the perspectives of university students and identified multiple themes reflecting how such conflicts are experienced. The findings indicated that interparental conflict was a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by economic, relational, parenting, and contextual factors, rather than isolated disagreements. These findings also suggested that such dynamics may influence students' relational schemas, highlighting the importance of interventions that address both emotional experiences and cognitive appraisals related to family conflict.

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