

Interparental Conflict and Emerging Adults' Psychological Distress: Do Cognitive Appraisals Matter?

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Abstract

Exposure to interparental conflict is a risk factor for psychological problems in emerging adulthood. The present study explored the links among interparental conflict, cognitive appraisals, and psychological distress in emerging adulthood. Three hundred thirteen emerging adults (228 females, 72.8%; 85 males, 27.2%) between the ages of 18 to 27 ($M = 19.86$, $SD = 1.54$) participated in the research. Participants completed measures of Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale (CPIC), Threat and Self-blame scales of the CPIC, and Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI). Findings showed that interparental conflict directly affected the appraisals of threat and self-blame in emerging adulthood. Results from multiple mediation analyses indicated that appraisals of threat and self-blame fully mediate the relationship between interparental conflict and psychological distress. That is, interparental conflict was linked to increased appraisals of threat and self-blame, which in turn was related to greater psychological distress. Results suggest that exposure to interparental conflict is still a potential risk factor beyond childhood and adolescence period.

Keywords: interparental conflict, cognitive appraisals, psychological distress, emerging adults, structural model



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Ebeveynler Arası Çatışma ve Beliren Yetişkinlerin Psikolojik Sıkıntıları: Bilişsel Değerlendirmeler Önemli Mi?

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Öz

Ebeveynler arası çatışmaya maruz kalma, beliren yetişkinlikte psikolojik problemler için önemli bir risk faktörüdür. Bu çalışmada, ebeveynler arası çatışma, bilişsel değerlendirmeler ve psikolojik sıkıntı arasındaki bağlantılar incelenmiştir. Yaşları 18 ile 27 ($ORT = 19.86$, $SS = 1.54$) arasında değişen toplam 313 beliren yetişkin (228 kadın, %72.8; 85 erkek, %27.2) çalışmada yer almıştır. Katılımcılar, Çocukların Evlilik Çatışmasını Algılaması Ölçeği (CPIC), CPIC'in Tehdit ve Kendini Suçlama alt boyutları ile Kısa Semptom Envanteri'ni (KSE) doldurmuşlardır. Araştırma bulguları, ebeveynler arası çatışmanın beliren yetişkinlikte tehdit ve kendini suçlama değerlendirmelerini doğrudan etkilediğini göstermiştir. Çoklu aracılık analizlerinden elde edilen bulgular, tehdit ve kendini suçlama algılarının ebeveynler arası çatışma ve psikolojik sıkıntı arasındaki ilişkide tam aracılık ettiğini göstermiştir. Başka bir deyişle, çalışmada ebeveynler arası çatışmanın artan tehdit ve kendini suçlama algılarıyla bağlantılı olduğu; bunun da daha fazla psikolojik sıkıntıyla ilişkilendiği saptanmıştır. Araştırma bulguları, ebeveynler arası çatışmaya maruz kalmanın çocukluk ve ergenlik dönemlerinin de ötesinde hala potansiyel bir risk faktörü olduğunu göstermiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: ebeveynler arası çatışma, bilişsel değerlendirmeler, psikolojik sıkıntı, beliren yetişkinler, yapısal model



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INTRODUCTION

Interparental conflict is a significant risk factor for the psychosocial and emotional development of offspring. Family researchers have mostly focused on the frequency, intensity, resolution of family conflicts, and its subsequent impacts on children's mental health. A large body of empirical research has documented that the frequent, intense, and unresolved interparental conflict is linked with internalized and externalized behaviors of children (see reviews by Cummings & Davies, 2002; Zimet & Jacob, 2001). In past studies, potential mediating mechanisms that account for the relationship between marital discord and child/adolescent adjustment were also tested by the researchers (e.g., Cummings, George, McCoy, & Davies, 2012; Grych, Fincham, Jouriles, & McDonald, 2000). Most of the studies in this field were conducted with the participation of children and adolescents within western cultures (Cummings & Davies, 2002). However, it is also necessary to test whether these associations can be replicated in non-western cultures. To this aim, in the present research, guided by Grych and Fincham's (1990) cognitive contextual framework, we tested a theoretical model examining direct effect of interparental conflict on emerging adults' psychological distress and indirect effects of interparental conflict on emerging adults' psychological distress through cognitive appraisals. Up to date, the effects of marital relationships on children's adjustment were commonly examined in western cultures and examining the cognitive contextual viewpoint in Turkish culture will make an important contribution to the existing studies. One another contribution of this study is to include emerging adults who are relatively less studied age group in terms of interparental conflict and mental health. As a new period of life course, emerging adulthood including the features of identity explorations, instability, self-focus, feeling in-between, and possibility covers the ages from late teens through late 20s (Arnett, 2007). During this transitional developmental period, unpredictable family environment is linked with mental health problems in emerging adults (Kolak, Van Wade, & Ross, 2018). Thus, a better understanding of the links between interparental conflict, cognitive appraisals, and psychological distress can provide an understanding about etiology of mental health problems of emerging adults.

Interparental Conflict and Psychological Distress

Exposure of children to interparental conflict is associated with many negative consequences, such as depression, anxiety, aggressive behaviors, sleep problems, academic difficulties, and peer-related problems in children (Cummings & Davies, 2010; Davis & Ekins, 2009). Interparental conflict has been linked to depressive symptoms among adolescents (Santiago & Wadsworth, 2009) and young adults (Herrenkohl, Kosterman, Hawkins, & Mason, 2009). In a qualitative study (Sağkal & Türnüklü, 2017), it was found that interparental conflict negatively influences not only children's psychosocial adjustment, but also parent-child relationships. In a small number of studies, it has been shown that the negative effects of interparental conflict on offspring's mental health continue until early adulthood (Amato & Sobolewski, 2001). Zill, Morrison, and Coiro (1993) indicated that exposure to chronic interparental conflict during childhood was linked with psychological and relational problems during early adulthood. Recent research results also demonstrate that interparental conflict is linked with greater depression, loneliness, and lower romantic competence in emerging adulthood (Kumar & Mattanah, 2018). Alves, Cunha, Carvalho, and Loureiro (2019) in their study report that frequent, intense, and unresolved interparental conflict predicts depressive symptoms in emerging adults. Furthermore, in a recent study, Sağkal and Özdemir (2019) report that perceived interparental conflict is linked with emerging adults' couple satisfaction via romantic relationship conflict and marital attitudes. Thus, based on previous empirical studies, it would be expected that interparental conflict would be related to mental health outcomes of emerging adults.

Mediator Mechanism

It is seen that the researches that investigate the effect of marital relationship on children's adjustment primarily focus on the direct relationship between marital conflict and adjustment problems in children (Grych & Fincham, 1990). However, research in recent decades has focused on the question of through which mechanisms and processes interparental conflict affect adjustment problems in children (Cummings & Davies, 2002). When the literature is examined, it appears that appraisals of threat and self-blame mediate in the link between marital conflict and psychological distress.

One of the most important theoretical approaches to explain the effects of interparental conflict on children's adjustment is the cognitive contextual framework (Grych & Fincham, 1990). Cognitive contextual framework proposes that how children interpret conflict is highly influential on children's adjustment. According to this theoretical view, appraisals of threat related to the interparental conflict and the child's self-blame for this conflict are seen as an important mechanism explaining the link between interparental conflict and adjustment problems of the children and youth (Grych & Fincham, 1990). The child, confronted

with the marital conflict, primarily assesses whether the conflict is related to herself or himself and the potential threats that may result in conflict (Fosco, DeBoard, & Grych, 2007). Threat appraisal is the expectation that something bad will happen, as a result of the conflict, the child himself/herself or a family member might be physically damaged, or the conflict may lead to divorce (Atkinson, Dadds, Chipuer, & Dawe, 2009). Stable, ever-increasing threat appraisal is seen as a major risk factor in terms of the child's adjustment problems (Fosco et al., 2007). Cross-sectional and longitudinal studies show that appraisal of threat is associated with internalizing problems (Fosco & Grych, 2008; Grych et al., 2000; Grych, Harold, Miles, 2003). In general, the proposals of the cognitive contextual framework were supported in cross-sectional, meta-analytic, and longitudinal studies (Fosco et al., 2007; Fosco & Grych, 2008; Grych & Fincham, 1993; Grych et al., 2000; Grych et al., 2003). Even recent findings from western studies (e.g., Fosco & Lydon-Staley, 2019) also provide evidence that cognitive appraisals mediate the links between interparental conflict and mental health outcomes such as depression, anxiety, anger, positive affect, life satisfaction, meaning, and purpose in life.

The Present Study

Although emerging adults have achieved autonomy in most cases, their parents are still an important source of social support for them (Chisholm & Hurrelmann, 1995). Researchers have recognized the importance of strong family ties for identity development and life satisfaction in the process of transitioning from adolescence to adulthood (Crocetti & Meeus, 2015). It is important to understand the links between exposure to interparental conflict and mental health problems for emerging adults since this age group is close to marriage and it is likely that they will transfer their past negative schema about marriages/family relationships to their own romantic relationships or marriages (Allen & Mitchell, 2015). Thus, a better understanding of the associations between observing interparental conflict and mental health problems in emerging adults may offer insight into a potentially problematic family processes before they have problems in their future relationships or marriages. Thus, the purpose of the present study was to examine direct effects of exposure to interparental conflict on psychological distress and indirect effects of exposure to interparental conflict on psychological distress through appraisals of threat and self-blame during emerging adulthood.

METHOD

Participants

Data for the present study were collected from 313 emerging adults (228 females, 72.8%; 85 males, 27.2%) attending a large state university located in a western city of Turkey. Ages of the participants ranged from 18 to 27 ($M = 19.86$, $SD = 1.54$). It was seen that the majority of the participants were freshman students (%53) and the others were balanced in terms of class levels. The majority of the participants (%99) reported that they were living with both parents. Most of the mothers have graduated from middle school and below (70.9%), most of the fathers have graduated from high school and below (73.2%). Median monthly family income was in the range of 2000TL to 3000TL (approximately \$520 to \$790).

Measures

Interparental conflict. In order to measure participants' perception of interparental conflict, conflict properties factor of the Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale (CPIC; Grych, Seid, & Fincham, 1992) was used. Conflict properties factor of the CPIC include three subscales namely, frequency, intensity, and resolution. Items are responded on a 3-point Likert scale. While the CPIC was developed for children (Grych et al., 1992), it has been shown to be a valid and reliable measurement tool for adolescents and emerging adults in subsequent studies (e.g., Bickham & Fiese, 1997; Keeports & Pittman, 2015; Moura, dos Santos, Rocha, & Matos, 2010). In this study, Turkish version of the CPIC was used (Ulu & Fışiloğlu, 2004). The scale is composed of 17 items, 6 of which assess the frequency, 6 of which assess the resolution, and 5 of which assess the intensity of interparental conflict. In this study, validity and reliability of the scales was tested on emerging adult sample. The results of confirmatory factor analysis yielded acceptable goodness-of-fit indices: $\chi^2(116) = 303.260$, $p < .001$, $\chi^2/df = 2.61$, CFI = .92, GFI = .89, and RMSEA = .07 CI [.06, .08]. The Cronbach's alpha estimates were .85, .85, .86, and .93 for frequency, intensity, resolution, and total scale, respectively. High scores on the scales indicate exposure to higher levels of interparental conflict.

Appraisals of threat and self-blame. Threat and Self-blame Scales of the CPIC (Grych et al., 1992) was used to measure emerging adults' cognitive appraisals of interparental conflict. The original threat scale includes 12 items related with threat and coping efficacy. The self-blame scale involves a total of nine items related to self-blame and the contents of the conflict. Items are responded on a 3-point Likert scale. The sum of threat and coping efficacy items constitute threat score, and sum of the items related with self-blame and content of the conflict constitute the self-blame score. As stated above, it has been shown that

the CPIC was valid and reliable measurement tool for emerging adults (e.g., Bickham & Fiese, 1997; Keeports & Pittman, 2015; Moura et al., 2010). In this study, the factor structure of the scales was assessed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The results revealed an acceptable model fit for the Threat Scale: $\chi^2(43) = 129.893, p < .001, \chi^2/df = 3.02, CFI = .91, GFI = .92,$ and $RMSEA = .08$ CI [.07, .10]. In addition, the CFA results for the Self-blame Scale suggested an adequate model fit: $\chi^2(27) = 66.840, p < .001, \chi^2/df = 2.48, CFI = .94, GFI = .96,$ and $RMSEA = .07$ CI [.05, .09]. The Cronbach's alpha estimates were .83 and .77 for the Threat and Self-blame Scale, respectively. Higher scores on the scales indicate high perceived threat and self-blame.

Psychological distress. In order to assess psychological distress, the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI; Derogatis & Spencer, 1982) was used in the research. Turkish version of the BSI includes 53 items and consists of Anxiety, Depression, Negative Self, Somatization, and Hostility dimensions (Şahin & Durak, 1994). The items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale. Higher scores from each dimension indicate higher levels of psychological distress. Both the original and Turkish version of BSI has good validity and reliability indices (Derogatis & Spencer, 1982; Şahin & Durak, 1994). In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for Anxiety, Depression, Negative Self, Somatization, and Hostility were .86, .87, .85, .77, and .78, respectively.

Procedure

The data collection process of the study was conducted by the researchers in the classrooms with the participation of volunteer students. Participants verbally consented to take part in the survey before completing it. The anonymous self-report survey involved basic demographic information form and instruments assessing interparental conflict, cognitive appraisals, and psychological distress. Students had a one class hour period to complete the survey. The participants enrolled in introductory education and psychology classes received extra course credit for their participation in the research. The research was ethically approved by Aydın Adnan Menderes University Department of Scientific Research Projects.

Data Analysis

In the present study, following preliminary analyses (e.g., missing values, outliers, assumption of normality), bivariate correlations were computed among interparental conflict, appraisals of threat, self-blame, and psychological distress. As recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), the two-step procedure including assessment of measurement and structural model was carried out. Initially, the measurement model was tested to assess whether the observed variables represented the underlying latent constructs. Secondly, the structural model was tested by a maximum likelihood estimation using AMOS 21.0. As the structural model includes particularly two mediators, following Preacher and Hayes (2008), a single-step multiple mediation model was employed. Multiple mediation model enabling simultaneous testing of multiple indirect effects reduces parameter bias and helps researchers to compare the magnitudes of the mediators (Hayes, Preacher, & Myers, 2011). In the analysis of structural model, bootstrapping method (with 5000 bootstrap resamples and 95% bias corrected confidence intervals) which does not require multivariate normality was performed to compute the significance of the specific indirect effects (Amos Development Corporation, 2012). Finally, we contrasted the relative magnitudes of the specific indirect effects.

FINDINGS

Preliminary Analyses

Prior to main analyses, the data were screened and assumptions were tested (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). As the Little's MCAR test ($\chi^2 = 804.403, df = 800, p = .45$) demonstrated that the data were missing completely at random, 8 cases with missing values were omitted from the data set. Univariate and multivariate outliers detected using standardized z-scores and the Mahalanobis distance were removed listwise, leaving a total of 296 cases for analyses. Absolute values of skewness indexes < 3 and absolute values of kurtosis indexes < 10 satisfied the assumption of univariate normal distribution (Kline, 2011). As the multivariate kurtosis critical ratio was larger than the recommended threshold of 5.0 (10.45), the assumption of multivariate normality was violated (Byrne, 2010). In the analysis of structural model, bootstrapping method which does not require multivariate normality was performed (Hayes et al., 2011).

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations

The means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations among interparental conflict, appraisals of threat, self-blame, and psychological distress were presented in Table 1. Interparental conflict was positively correlated with both cognitive contextual variables and psychological distress. Appraisals of threat and self-blame were also positively correlated with psychological distress.

Table 1

The Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among Study Variables (n = 296)

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
1. Interparental conflict	1.49	.39	-			
2. Appraisals of threat	1.77	.42	.64**	-		
3. Self-blame	1.17	.24	.17**	.15*	-	
4. Psychological distress	1.06	.61	.20**	.25**	.26**	-

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Measurement Model

Before the structural model, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to assess the overall fit of the measurement model including interparental conflict, appraisals of threat, self-blame, and psychological distress as latent variables. Interparental conflict latent variable was represented by measures of frequency, intensity, and resolution. Appraisals of threat and self-blame latent variables were represented by three parcels each using an item-to-construct balance approach (Little, Cunningham, Shahar, & Widaman, 2002). Psychological distress latent variable was represented by measures of anxiety, depression, negative self, somatization, and hostility. The measurement model provided a good fit to the data: $\chi^2(71) = 165.129$, $p < .001$, $\chi^2/df = 2.37$, CFI = .96, GFI = .93, and RMSEA = .07 CI [.05, .08]. Factor loadings ranged from .80 to .89 for interparental conflict, .81 to .85 for appraisals of threat, .69 to .80 for self-blame, .70 to .91 for psychological distress, and they were all significantly different from zero at the $p < .001$ level (see Table 2). Furthermore, reliability and validity of the measurement model was also assessed. As presented in Table 2, composite reliability coefficients ranged from .79 to .92 and all were above the .70 threshold, supporting reliability of the measurement model (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). The average variance extracted (AVE) ranged from .56 to .74 and all AVE values exceeded the benchmark of .50, supporting the convergent validity of the model (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988).

Table 2

Measurement Model: Standardized Parameter Estimates, Reliability, and Convergent Validity Indices

	Standardized parameter estimates	CR	AVE
Resolution ← Interparental conflict	.80***		
Intensity ← Interparental conflict	.89***	.89	.74
Frequency ← Interparental conflict	.89***		
A1 ← Appraisals of threat	.85***		
A2 ← Appraisals of threat	.82***	.87	.69
A3 ← Appraisals of threat	.81***		
S1 ← Self-blame	.80***		
S2 ← Self-blame	.69***	.79	.56
S3 ← Self-blame	.74***		
Anxiety ← Psychological distress	.91***		
Depression ← Psychological distress	.89***	.92	.69
Negative self ← Psychological distress	.88***		
Somatization ← Psychological distress	.70***		
Hostility ← Psychological distress	.77***		

Notes. A1-A3 are three parcels of appraisals of threat; S1-S3 are three parcels of self-blame; CR = Composite reliability; AVE = Average variance extracted; *** $p < .001$

Moreover, in order to assess discriminant validity, we compared the square root of AVE for each construct with the correlation with any other latent construct. As presented in Table 3, the square root of AVE for each construct was greater than the correlation values, confirming discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Overall, all these results ensure the reliability and validity of the measurement model.

Table 3
Discriminant Validity of Measures

Measures	1	2	3	4
1. Interparental conflict	.86			
2. Appraisals of threat	.73	.83		
3. Self-blame	.18	.16	.75	
4. Psychological distress	.21	.29	.29	.83

Note. Numbers on the diagonal (in boldface) are the square roots of AVE

Structural Model

The results of the structural model showed a good fit to the data (see Fig. 1): $\chi^2(72, n = 296) = 165.486, p < .001, \chi^2/df = 2.30, CFI = .96, GFI = .93, RMSEA = .07$ CI [.05, .08]. Standardized parameter estimates demonstrated that interparental conflict was significantly and positively associated with appraisals of threat ($\beta = .73, p < .001$) and self-blame ($\beta = .18, p < .01$). Appraisals of threat ($\beta = .26, p < .01$) and self-blame ($\beta = .26, p < .001$) were also significantly and positively associated with psychological distress. However, direct effect of interparental conflict on psychological distress was not significant ($\beta = -.02, p > .05$). Interparental conflict, appraisals of threat, and self-blame accounted 14% of the variance in emerging adults' psychological distress. To test significance of indirect effects in the structural model, we used 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals based on 5000 bootstrap resamples. The findings demonstrated the total indirect effect of interparental conflict on emerging adults' psychological distress through both mediators was significant ($\beta = .71, 95\% \text{ CI } [.26, 1.21], p < .01$). Further analyses indicated that specific indirect effects through appraisals of threat ($\beta = .58, 95\% \text{ CI } [.14, 1.06], p < .01$) and self-blame ($\beta = .14, 95\% \text{ CI } [.03, .31], p < .05$) were significant. Pairwise contrast test showed that the specific indirect effects did not differ significantly from each other ($\beta = .44, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.02, .93], p > .05$) (see Table 4).

Table 4
Total and Specific Indirect Effects of Interparental Conflict on Psychological Distress

Model Pathways	Point Estimates	95% CI		p
		Lower	Upper	
Total indirect effect	.71	.26	1.21	.002
1. Interparental conflict → Appraisals of threat → Psychological distress	.58	.14	1.06	.007
2. Interparental conflict → Self-blame → Psychological distress	.14	.03	.31	.011
Contrast between 1 and 2	.44	-.02	.93	.062

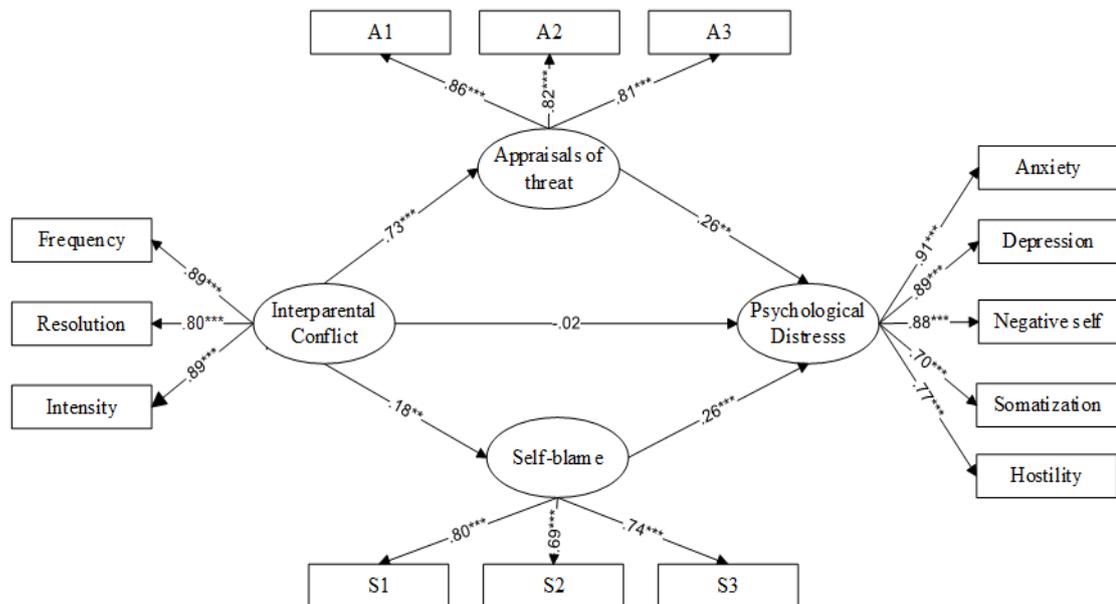


Figure 1. The mediation model.

Note. Standardized path coefficients are presented; A1-A3 are three parcels of appraisals of threat; S1-S3 are three parcels of self-blame; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The present study investigated links between interparental conflict, appraisals of threat, self-blame, and psychological distress in emerging adulthood. Numerous studies have shown that interparental conflict was associated with children's and adolescents' adjustment problems (see reviews by Cummings & Davies, 2002; Zimet & Jacob, 2001). However, there is an important gap in the literature whether interparental conflict is still linked with children's adjustment in subsequent developmental periods. Within this context, an important contribution of the present study is to address the links between interparental conflict, cognitive appraisals, and psychological distress in emerging adulthood. Overall, research results demonstrated that interparental conflict is indirectly linked with psychological distress via the mechanism of appraisals of threat and self-blame in emerging adulthood.

In the research, analyses of structural model showed that appraisals of threat and self-blame fully mediate the link between interparental conflict and psychological distress. The full mediation suggests that frequent, intense, and unresolved interparental conflict increase the appraisals of threat and self-blame, which in turn contribute to higher levels of psychological distress. This result is consistent with the results of previous studies conducted in western societies (Atkinson et al., 2009; Fosco et al., 2007; Fosco & Lydon-Staley, 2019; Grych et al., 2000; Grych et al., 2003; Keeports & Pittman, 2017). That is, the current research provides empirical support for the argument that exposure to frequent, intense, and unresolved interparental conflict continues to have adverse effects on offspring beyond childhood and adolescence years. Findings of the present study are also in accordance with the theoretical assumptions of cognitive contextual framework (Grych & Fincham, 1990). According to this theoretical framework, children witnessing interparental conflict make evaluations about how threatening the conflict might be for themselves, their family, and their relationships with parents and also, they make evaluations about reasons causing this conflict. In this line of thought, children developing cognitive appraisals of threat and blaming themselves for their parents' conflict are likely to experience adjustment problems (Grych & Fincham, 1993). Indeed, findings from qualitative researches (e.g., Sağkal & Tümlüklü, 2017) support that while destructive marital conflict increases appraisals of threat and self-blame in children, constructive conflict resolution has been associated with experiences of close family ties and cohesion. As a family member, children monitor interparental interactions, assess the risk factors and try to understand causes of interparental conflict. Within this perspective, it is proposed that children with greater appraisals of threat and self-blame are at higher risk to experience depression and anxiety (Fosco & Lydon-Staley, 2019). According to Keeports and Pittman (2017), as today's youth continues their education early to late 20s, most of the emerging adults depend socially, emotionally, and financially on their parents and thus family environment may still become influential on mental health outcomes of emerging adult children. As a result, based on these empirical findings and theoretical explanations, it can be concluded that even though children reaches ages of emerging adulthood and mostly leave home for college education, families are still important sources in offspring's social and emotional development (Alves et al., 2019; Chisholm & Hurrelmann, 1995; Crocetti & Meeus, 2015). Similar to children and adolescents, emerging adults who are exposed to frequent, intense, and unresolved interparental conflict are likely to develop cognitive appraisals of threat and self-blame, which in turn, increase the likelihood of experiencing psychological distress.

The findings of the study should be interpreted within the framework of some limitations. As a first limitation, in the present study the effects of interparental conflict on emerging adults' psychological distress were revealed through self-report survey. Although children's own assessments are more closely related to their psychological functioning than that of parents' reports of marital conflict (Grych & Fincham, 1990), in future studies parental reports may also be included. As a second limitation, the data were collected from emerging adults who are currently enrolled in university and hence findings might not be generalized to other young people who are not enrolled in the educational system. For this reason, future studies may replicate the proposed hypothetical model on diverse sample groups. Another important limitation of the study was cross-sectional research design. To draw direction of causality among variables, longitudinal and experimental researches are needed. Thereby, future studies may test whether cognitive contextual framework longitudinally explain the links between interparental conflict and psychological

distress. Lastly, it should be noted that interparental conflict is associated with other familial factors such as parental problematic alcohol use and depression (Keller, Cummings, Davies, & Mitchell, 2008; Cummings, Schermerhorn, Keller, & Davies, 2008). Therefore, it is important to include multiple risk factors in the later studies while examining the effects of interparental conflict on children.

Despite these limitations, this study provided important evidence for the relationship between interparental conflict and offspring's psychological distress during emerging adulthood and identified the cognitive contextual framework as a mediating mechanism between these two constructs. Besides, the findings of the study highlight that interparental conflict is still a familial risk factor on the psychological adjustment of children who are currently being in a period of emerging adulthood. Therefore, the findings of this study suggest that giving trainings to parents about how they can resolve their marital conflict constructively should be an important target for future prevention and intervention studies. In addition, mental health experts giving psychological help to emerging adults who are currently experiencing distress related to interparental conflict should focus on their clients' cognitive appraisals of threat and blame. It is assumed that increasing skills of coping efficacy and reducing self-blaming thoughts may help emerging adults to experience greater subjective well-being.

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