

**МЕЖДУПОКОЛЕНЧЕСКИЯТ КОНФЛИКТ:
ПРИЧИНИ ЗА ПОРАЖДАНЕТО МУ И ВЛИЯНИЕТО МУ ВЪРХУ
СЕМЕЙНАТА БЛИЗОСТ**

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Резюме. В статията са изследвани причините за конфликтите между родители и деца в съвременните Арабски семейства в Република Израел. Разгледани са социалните, религиозните, културологичните и психологичните аспекти на изследвания проблем. Разкрита е връзката между възпитанието, психичното здраве и семейните отношения. В статията е представена психологическата специфика на изследвания проблем.

Ключови думи. Семейни конфликти, пропаст между поколенията, родителски авторитет, комуникация в Арабското семейство, бързи промени.

**THE INTERGENERATIONAL CONFLICT:
ITS CAUSES AND EFFECTS ON FAMILY COHESION**

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Abstract. The article examines the causes of the conflicts between parents and children in the contemporary Arab families in the Republic of Israel. The social, religious, culturological and psychological aspects of the researched

problem are considered. The connection between upbringing, mental health and family relations is revealed. The article presents the psychological specifics of the researched problem.

Key words. *Family conflicts, generational gap, parental authority, an Arab family communication, rapid changes.*

Introduction

The Arab community in Israel is considered an ethnic and national minority whose language and culture differ from the Jewish majority. In recent decades, this minority had gone through many social transformations that had created a generational gap in the family unit of this society.¹ Like all other traditional societies, Arab society had undergone a rapid process of cultural modernization due to interactions and integration with the political, cultural and economic life of secular Israeli society. In addition to technological changes, the forces of globalization influenced all aspects of Arab community life.

Actually, these changes and transformations that affected the Arab-Palestinian society in Israel led to several social and cultural crises; the most important of these crises are the intergenerational conflicts, which arose from the different cultural climate between generations. Really, it is considered one of the most important and biggest obstacles of socialization, as it reflects negatively the hierarchical structure of Arab family where the father has the authoritarian role.

In the past, the father was the dominant person of the family; the family submitted to his orders and rules. But today, after the modernization process that led to weakening his parental authority, where the younger generation became integrated with Israeli society, influenced by Western culture and addicted to technology, tended to change and adapt with the modern life. This led to weakening

¹ Jamal, Amal. (2011). *Arab minority nationalism in Israel: The politics of indigeneity*: Routledge.

of parental authority that wanted to preserve Palestinian customs and traditions. Unfortunately, this led to deep gap between fathers and sons' generation and also to conflicts that made family disintegration. On one hand, parents had difficulties in finding clear and agreed standards for raising children, which gave them feelings of guilty, insecurity and loss of path. Children, on the other hand, often observed parental confusion in education as a weakness, and it became more difficult for parents to use their authorities.²

Such a conflict between generations is normal in a patriarchal family that was undergone a rapid transformation, with the intellectual, cultural and technological changes and developments of society. The perception of new generations was changing in terms of ideas, priorities and life quality. This article examines the conflicts resulting from this gap and its impact on cohesion of the Arab family members in Israel. Besides, it presents some theories that support the existence of family conflicts and addresses the dimensions of communication that contribute to decrease or increase these conflicts.

Being parent means dealing with many dilemmas constantly, which were often caused by internal contradictions. In recent years, the emphasis might be on the discipline and obedience of children in the family, because of the social disintegration in modern times, nowadays we can see the helpless parents often stand in front of their children and find it difficult to use their power, unlike in the past, where the dominant authorities were for parents.³ In addition, most parents in Arab society at the past agreed on certain methods of control in raising their children. Everyone used similar methods of reward and punishment, there was no confusion or variety of education styles, and none of them took a special approach

² Ghanem, As' ad. (2000). "The Palestinian minority in Israel: The'challenge'of the Jewish state and its implications." *Third World Quarterly* 21 (1):87-104.

³ Aliza, shani. (2016). "Parental authority in an intergenerational aspect": Parental education in the face of the challenges of the new age: Publications Department, Ministry of Education.

in upbringing different from others. This resulted for the children to have similar personalities because they had undergone the same social control in both the family and the school. While in these days, there are big differences between people's social control means of teaching and educating and how they use them differently. Social control means are implements (mechanism) of socialization to ensure that the individual adheres to society standards, without these means, social chaos would have spread among people.

Various social control means can be structured as either a punishment or a reward, and they aim to get individual compliance to society standards. ⁴In fact, because of numerous social changes that led to different life conditions, social control means had changed as well. For example, smoking in front of a father or a grandfather was forbidden and even a shameful even though the smoker was a sane, adult or even married, but today no one follows this social standard because of the society's changing view about the "value of respect" and associated norms.⁵ Another example: the education levels in the Arab community had increased, so most people became aware of the harms of using beatings and other means of violence in upbringing, they moved away from such means that were previously common, they used many modern means instead, such as: deprivation, understanding, dialogue and carrot-and-stick approach.

However, there are social groups that still use traditional methods of raising children which make the children of one generation unequal and unnatural morally, socially and even personally. Accordingly, society had not agreed on one approach of social control, this created an appearance of educational chaos in one social group more than another.

⁴ Hamdallah, Rabia.(2005). " Anarchy of Education in the Arab Society Responsibili of Family and Society ": Al Qasimi Academy. Academic College of Education - Baqa Al Gharbia

⁵ הקיבוץ המאוחד: אביב-תל, הם היו פלחים. (1964). ה' רוזנפלד

Conflicts between Parents and Children

Conflict between parents and children can be defined as a situation in which parents and sons confront each other. The source of this disagreement can vary greatly from relatively trivial issues such as choosing clothes or a bedtime routine to very serious issues related to child's safety and well-being. One of the main goals of children upbringing is their socialization which is the process that parents instill the appropriate values and behaviors in their children in order to be good society members. It often leads to conflict if the children resisted the attempts of parents to modify their behavior. In addition, when one finds himself/herself in two contradictory situations, one requires a certain behavior and the other requires another different and inconsistent behavior. So, the existence of two opposing and contradictory patterns that hinders individual from social consensus and this also leads to conflicts. ⁶

Conflict is defined as a social process in which every individuals wish to achieve their own goals (satisfy their needs, achieve their interests) by alienating, destroying or subjugating other individuals or groups that aspire or wish to achieve similar goals.⁷ Conflict is also defined as a condition in which an individual situation when someone cannot satisfy his/ her ambitions, which can lead to anxiety and disorder. ⁸

The sociologist Karl Mannheim had observed that generational differences lie in their transition from youth to adulthood, besides, many sociologists had studied the ways in which generations are separated from each other not only at

⁶ Khalil, Abdel Rahman. Social Psychology. Edition 3. Amman. Dar Alfekr. 2010. pg. 198

⁷ Mostafa, Jamal Mohamed. Social sociology. Alexandria. Dar Almaarifa Algamaia, 2007

⁸ Bahaa addin, Majed. Psychological Stress, Problems and Impact on Mental Health. Amman. Dar Assafaa, 2008.

home but also at different social events or social places (such as churches and clubs, "centers for the elderly" and "centers for the young").

The social theory of the intergenerational gap had emerged in 1960 when the new generation (later known as the baby boom period) began to oppose all their parents' previous beliefs in terms of music, values and governmental and political views. Currently, sociologists had referred to the "intergenerational gap" as a differentiation resulting from a person's age, so sociologists had divided lifespan into three levels: childhood, middle age and retirement age. It was usually for age groups that each one is physically isolated from the other with very little social interaction when engaging in any major activities due to age barriers, with the exception of nuclear families. ⁹

Facts about Conflict between parents and children

First of all, conflict between parents and children is inevitable since parents cannot engage in the process of socializing without having to confront their often reluctant child, and children cannot test the limits of their developing independence without their parents' frustrating, too.

Secondly, it may be surprising issue that the conflict between parents and children is not necessarily a negative event. Although we often think of conflict as something should be avoided, there is growing evidence that it may be a critical stimulation for children social cognitive. Conflict often forces children to adopt others' point of view (in order to accurately understand what bothers them about the situation), practice negotiation skills, understand moral and social values, and effectively regulate their emotions in order to avoid escalation of conflict.

Finally, conflict between parents and children is not an individual phenomenon. The nature and frequency of conflicts as well as strategies for dealing with conflict change gradually with the development of children.

⁹ Jane Pilcher, (1993). Mannheim's sociology of generations: an undervalued legacy

For instance, a parent who is trying to manage his/her child's nap schedule will face different challenges than another parent who is trying to manage the curfew for teenage children. As children grow, they become more receptive to recognizing and adhering to their parents' point of view and more able to negotiate and resist their instructions. Similarly, parents' expectations of their children's behavior during conflict situations, as well as their perspective on their role as a social factor, will change as their child grows. However, it also seems to be great continuity in how couples manage conflict. When a pattern of effective and mutually interacting conflict management is created where the two partners freely express their different views and work together to solve problems early, it is likely to continue through childhood despite the changing nature of conflicts between parents and children. Since it is a topic of great theoretical interest, I will present a summary of theoretical views on these conflicts.¹⁰

Historical Theories about Conflict between parents and children

There is a rich variety of pedagogical theories that address the role of conflict in child development as conflict plays an important role in a variety of pedagogical and educational fields, including the children's personality, emotional, moral and even cognitive development. Consequently, there should be enough realization and understanding for this issue that the psychologists had always concerned about.

As an example for the purpose of conflict in the theory of evolution, we can study the work of the Viennese neurologist Sigmund Freud. Freud's theories are arguably foundational to the most of the current theories in human development, and his focus on the conflict between parents and children's role in structuring personality development shows the importance of this conflict. According to

¹⁰ M Goodman, S F Waters, and R A Thompson, (2012). Parent– Offspring Conflict. University of California, Davis, CA, USA.

Freud's theory in the psychosexual development, adults personality emerges through a series of four stages (oral, anal, phallic, and genital), where children are facing some sort of conflict between the desire to meet the wishes of their physical and the restrictions society put on their ability to satisfy those desires. More importantly, these societal restrictions come primarily from the children's parents very early of their life; therefore, Freud believed that parental behavior during these conflicts plays a central role in determining whether the impact of each stage is positive or negative on the development of child's personality.

For instance, Freud argued that children during childhood and at the anal stage of development face a great conflict between their desire to satisfy themselves by emptying their intestines and the lately placed restrictions on this behavior as their parents are trying to train them to use toilet. If parents are too rigid or too lenient in their toilet training, children can grow up to be both overly focused on hygiene and organization, or be cruel. On the other hand, proper management of conflict during toilet training would allow child to optimally progress to the next stages of development.

Although many of Freud's ideas, including the stages of his psychosexual development, were not empirically generated, his argument about the lasting impact of early experience, including the experience of conflict between children and their caregivers, remains fundamental to developmental science. Most importantly, many neo-Freudians, including Erik Eriksson, also supported the idea that conflict between parents and children is necessary for the development of children character in their theories. In this context, other development theorists, including Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg and Lev Vygotsky described the conflict between parents and

children as an important stimulation for cognitive growth, moral development, and cultural skills growth. ¹¹

The **Symbolic Interactionism Theory** considers that the individuals' behavior with the family is a social interaction and a reflection of symbols that the individuals see, and they are directly affected by them negatively or positively in daily life situations. Cooley, a pioneer of this theory, believed that human society is a fabric of interactions, perceptions, impressions and assessments of one's mind with others' minds. In addition, according to Cooley, human psyche is a collection of ideas that interact and deal with the psyches of others.

According to this theory, the problems occurring among spouses or between parents and children are caused by poor interactions between them which are caused by misunderstanding of values, norms, attitudes and approaches between the parties. Here the relations between positions and roles and how every party understands them. Currently, there is an overlap between the roles played by the wife and husband within the family; the women and children freedom in the light of changes that had taken place in modern societies had led to problems in family relations in various forms. ¹²

For the Arab community, the changing society affected the division of family working and made significant educational and social attitudes and the ways of dealing with them changes. For example, children interpret their parents' behavior as traditional attitudes and that the roles they play are not appropriate for a modern changing society. Women had taken unprecedented legal freedom, which gave them a different social, personal and familial status. Lastly, dealing with new

¹¹ Al Ghamdi, Hussein Abd Elfattah (2010). The Psychosocial Analysis Theory. Om al Qura University.

¹² Elwan, (1981). Raising Children in Islam. Vol. (1-2), pp 3.

and changing circumstances had changed relationships and interactions between family members, especially between parents and children.

As for **Social Control Theory** that illustrates the individual's compliance to the norms of society, the individual learns the discipline behavior through socialization. There are formal and informal laws or standards that an individual must observe and respect; otherwise s/he will be punished. So there is positive and negative social control. The goal of social control is to ensure order and interdependence within group or society through respecting customs, traditions, values, standards and official laws. Many scientists said that: all social problems are related to social control. So it can be said that the opposite of social control is detachment, or social deviation.

Each cultural society has its own social control means that may be unacceptable for another. There are subcultures, groups, collections and institutions within complex and compound cultural societies that differ in means, such as associations, unions, families, schools, social groups, sects and minorities.¹³ This is largely applied on the Arab minority in Israel, whose youth adopt values, customs and principles that are different from those of their society (their parents) where the clash between what is acceptable to one group (parents) and what is unacceptable to another group (youth) occurs.

The **Social Change Theory** - today, sociology is called "the science of social change", for the impact of change in society's life. From creation to the present day, there is no society in the world that has not constantly changed. In reality, it is important to separate cultural change from social change. Social change is part of a comprehensive and general cultural change that extends to all cultural aspects (literature, art, technology...etc.) not just social. While social change is a change in social organization and construction, which are part of the overall cultural

¹³ Sanaa, a(1984). Introduction to sociology. Alexandria: Dar Almaarefa Al Jamiyah.

format so social change is a result of cultural change. Social change is defined as "... every change that occurs on the structure of society includes class structure, social systems, patterns of social relations and the values and norms that affect the individuals' behavior and that determine their status and roles in various social organizations to which they belong."

There are many factors that lead to change the structure and functions of society, which creates new social phenomena and dissolves others phenomena. From these factors; the population, technological, cultural, religious, environmental, intellectual, economic, and political factor. In fact, these factors bring changes in the systems, structures and functions of society, resulting to either progress and growth development, or underdevelopment and regress. ¹⁴

Usually, the process of social change is accompanied by situations of social disorder and confusion because society needs to remove some of its characteristics in favor of new ones that it must acquire and deal with. These disorders and confusion are called "non-normative", i.e., the lack of social norms clarifying for people in new situations. In this case, some people follow standard "A", standard "B", or standard "C" in the same situation. The following quote illustrates this: "...If social solidarity expresses a state of collective ideological integration, then non-normative is considered a state of disorganization, insecurity, loss of norms, with making the collective representations completely destroyed. In this sense, non-normative presupposes a precondition in which behavior is normalized which causes to grinding social crisis at the heart of balance and to the emergence of anxiety in a large number of people, leading to quake the force majeure of tradition, and widespread non-normative rumor". ¹⁵

¹⁴ Al Ghazawi and others (1992). The Introduction to sociology. Amman: Dar Ashoroq.

¹⁵ Reference in Sociology Terms. Professors of the sociology Department at the University of Alexandria. Alexandria: Dar Almaarefa Al Jamiyah.

Arab society today is undergoing rapid and radical social change, which made it progress in some aspects and regress in others. Because of the speed of change, which is subject to many factors, several "non-standard" situations had emerged. Therefore, it is necessary to deal with social change in order to explain the phenomena of educational disorder common within the family and Arab society, especially its causes and consequences.

There are those who accept change and renew, and those who reject them. If renew does not agree with other cultural values and elements; it is acceptable, and if it agrees with them; it is rejected. Perceptible changes such as technological change can be adopted and accepted faster than imperceptible changes and innovations such as language, values, customs, concepts, or religion...etc. For example, the permission of sexual relations before marriage is unacceptable in Arab society because it is contrary to existing values and Sharia law, while the introduction of technology to women's work at home is acceptable because it does not disagree with other family and cultural values. There are "innovators" and "conservators" in every society, who contrast about the acceptable and rejected changes and renews that take place in their societies. ¹⁶ Also, it is natural and expected that there are groups within Arab society that accept change and renew, and others that reject them. Acceptance and rejection are natural extremes in every changing society, but the dimensions of acceptance and rejection can be as dangerous for society as "social or educational chaos". Many members of Arab community who allow to transfer new habits and behaviors to their society are rejected by other "conservative groups"

¹⁶ Moore, W. E. (1965). *Social Change*. Englewood Cliffs: New York.

The Impact of Communication Patterns on Parent-Children Relationships:

The intra-family intergenerational relationship is one of the most important and long-lasting relationships in each individual's life. However, it can be seen that most people when they reach a certain age seek to break up and disengage from this relationship. Many psychologists who had studied this relationship relied on the **Objective Relationships Theory**.¹⁷ This theory considers independence and intergenerational conflict as a desirable aspect of adult relationships. Researchers, who interpret this phenomenon as a theory, consider that the target optimal of relationship within the family is the aspiration to equality, reciprocity and friendship between generations. One scientist, referring to this theory, defined intergenerational relations in the family as ideal relationships that have autonomy for both parents and children, in an ideal family, even if it is an extended family, everyone lives his life as an individual and the intergenerational relationship is characterized by mutual and social ties.¹⁸

In this context, a study indicated some elements that can have a big impact and they predict relations between parents and children in the family, as well as between other generations in which parental reactions and behaviors of family members, and the process of communication within the family unit are characterized.¹⁹ The researcher defined the process of communication within the family unit as the ability of an individual to influence the perceptions, emotions, thoughts and attitudes of others within the family system. Another study suggested that the contradictions, the unreal mixed messages transmitted and contained on

¹⁷ Kernberg, Otto F. (1995). Object relations theory and clinical psychoanalysis: Jason Aronson.

¹⁸ Galinsky, Adam D. (2002). "Creating and reducing intergroup conflict: The role of perspective-taking in affecting out-group evaluations." In *Toward phenomenology of groups and group membership*, 85-113. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

¹⁹ Ferreira, Antonio J. (1961). "Empathy and the bridge function of the ego." *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 9 (1):91-105.

each of tolerance and rejection, may construct among family members negative feelings such as frustration, humiliation, etc. These feelings create emotional tensions that cause conflicts between family members.²⁰

According to Fitzpatrick, family communication patterns affect various variables within the family such as conflict, conflict management, resolution, flexibility in children's education, family rituals and children's future romantic relationships, etc. Accordingly, the following two dimensions are examined and they are related to the communication system within different families:

Orientation of Communication- it is the degree to which a family creates an atmosphere that encourages all family members to engage in unrestricted interaction on a wide range of topics. If this aspect can be evaluated as a high dimension, it indicates the free and spontaneous interaction of family members in such a family system, which means that family members can interact with each other without time constraints and issues that arise during these interactions. These families are characterized as families in which family members spend a lot of time interacting with each other, sharing their personal activities, feelings, etc. However, families with a low orientation of communication are classified as families that are less involved in their own thoughts, feelings, and activities. Individuals in these families do not discuss activities that are specifically related to them and operate independently of each other. In the families that see the open orientation of communication as necessary to have a pleasant family life, i.e. a family with a higher orientation of communication, there are usually fewer serious conflicts, and their family members indicate positive communication between them.

²⁰ Caughlin, JP, AF Koerner, P Schrod, and MA Fitzpatrick. (2011). "Interpersonal communication in family relationships." In *The Sage handbook of interpersonal communication*, edited by J.P. Caughlin, A.F. Koerner, P. Schrod and M.A. Fitzpatrick, 679-714. London: Sage.

Conformity Orientation - this dimension refers to what extent the familial contact emphasizes the climate of homogeneity in attitudes, values and perceptions. This is a communication interaction with a unified understanding of beliefs and attitudes towards different topics and issues. Families with high rank of this dimension usually focus on harmony, avoiding conflicts and interdependence between family members, and they are classified as families that emphasize the obedience of children to parents and other adults who are associated with a family unit, so parents are the decision makers and children are expected to follow their parents. These are families with a traditional family structure; family members support and share various resources with each other. But families with low rank of this dimension are characterized by interactions that focus on heterogeneous attitudes and beliefs, the uniqueness and independence of family members. In such families, communication affects the equality of generations in the family. For example, children are generally involved in the decision-making process. These families have less faith in the traditional family structure, believe in families that are less organized in terms of hierarchy and that the relationship outside the family is just as important as the family relationship. In addition, their family members encourage personal development and believe in self-reliance rather than dependence on others.

Researchers claimed that both dimensions simultaneously affect family communication quality directly depends on the degree of each dimension. Moreover, these two dimensions connect and influence each other. Therefore, in order to predict the patterns of family, we must take into account the dimensions and interaction between them. Accordingly, four different types of family can be identified:

Consensual families – they are the families with the highest scores in both dimensions described above. Communication in such families is characterized by a

tension between pressure to agree and maintain a hierarchy within the family and an interest in open communication and searching for new ideas. In other words, parents of these families usually show interest in their children and believe that they are the decision makers for the family and children. This tension is commonly resolved by parents' listening to their children, they should show appreciation and admiration for children's presentation of activities, through that, children can understand the logic, beliefs and values behind the decisions. Moreover, children of these families can learn to appreciate family conversations and tend to adopt the values and beliefs of their parents. Then, conflict is considered a negative process that harms family, but since the never-ending conflict is perceived as a potential threat to family relations, they believe in participating in conflict resolution.

Pluralistic families – they are families with high scores in the orientation of communication and low scores in conformity orientation. Communication in such families is characterized by openness and lack of compulsory discussions in which all family members participate in. Parents of these families do not need to control their children or to make decisions for them. This parenting approach leads to family discussions with a mixture of opinions based on the advantages offered by family members during the discussion, their children opinions and allowing them to actively participate in decisions. Because of these families' focus on brainstorming and lack of pressure for adapting and obeying, they deal with conflicts openly. Besides, they do not try to avoid conflicts and find positive strategies to resolve them. Children of these families learn to estimate family conversations and to be independent, because parents encourage their ability to communicate and decision-making.

Protective families- they are families with low scores in the orientation of communication and high in conformity orientation. These families emphasize the obedience of children to the authority of parents and do not pay much attention to

open communication within the family. Parents in these families believe that they must make decisions for family members and children and they think that it is not worth for explaining these decisions to children. Then, conflicts perceived negatively because family members give too much emphasis to conformity and too little emphasis to open communication. Also, family members try to avoid conflicts and act in accordance with the interests and norms of family. However, since these families do not have proper communication skills, they also do not have the skills to resolve conflicts productively. Children in protective families learn that family conversations are little and do not trust their ability to make decisions independently.

Independent members' families - these families are characterized by a low degree in both dimensions. Communication in such families is characterized by little interaction, family members do not participate in family discussions, and many issues are not discussed. Parents in these families believe that all family members should be able to make their own decisions, but unlike pluralistic families, they do not care about the decisions of their children and communicating with them. In other words, there is an emotional separation between family members. Usually in such families, each family member is separated, so there is no conflict between them, therefore, there are not so many disagreements because each individual is limited by his personal interests. Children learn that there is little value in family conversations and that they need to make decisions independently.²¹

Summing up:

It can be noted that the intergenerational relationship is a complex system that has been widely studied. It is not preventable, but it can be seen as an aid to evolution. Moreover, there are various theories; some of them contradict each other

²¹ Koerner, Ascan F., and Mary Anne Fitzpatrick. (2002). "Toward a Theory of Family Communication." *Communication Theory* 12 (1):70-91.

in explaining relationships. Thus, most of them refer to conflicts and disagreements that arise when children reach the age of adulthood and want to be independent. Therefore, this is a sensitive age that can create intergenerational conflicts within the family relationship, especially when it comes to a family living under one roof like an extended Arab family. Especially with the rapid changes that imposed to family lifestyle with modernity and development witnessed by the world as a whole.

It can be said that the style of communication has great importance for alleviating conflicts in the family. For example, following the orientation of communication in pluralistic families make them do not face serious conflicts because family members believe in respect for each other's ideas, openness and lack of coercive discussions because parents do not need to control children where there are participation among family members and cooperation in resolving publicly managed conflicts. Children in these families learn to appreciate family conversations and to be independent, because parents encourage their abilities to communicate and make a decision.

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