



Research Article

Sources and predictors of adolescent-parent conflict among students of Nigustekle-Haimanot secondary school, Debre markos Town, Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a developmental period characterized by increased autonomy-seeking, changing family roles, and heightened academic and social demands that may intensify parent-adolescent conflict. Although such conflict is a normative aspect of adolescent development, persistent conflict may negatively affect adolescents' psychosocial well-being, academic adjustment, and family relationships. However, evidence on the sources and predictors of parent-adolescent conflict remains limited in Ethiopian secondary school settings. This study examined the sources and predictors of parent-adolescent conflict among Grade 9 and Grade 10 students of Nigus Tekle-Haimanot Secondary School in Debre Markos Town. From a target population of 987 students, a sample of 285 was initially selected via stratified random sampling, yielding a final analytical sample of 276 after excluding nine incomplete responses. Data were collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire adapted from the Parent-Adolescent Issues Checklist and analyzed using descriptive statistics, independent samples t-tests, one-way ANOVA, and multiple regression analysis. The findings showed that academic-related conflict was the most prominent source of parent-adolescent disagreement ($M=3.83$, $SD=0.37$), followed by household responsibility-related conflict ($M=3.38$, $SD=0.59$) and autonomy-related conflict ($M=3.32$, $SD=0.40$). No significant differences were observed across gender, parental occupation, parental education, parental income, or family structure. The conflict domains collectively explained 83.7% of the variance in overall parent-adolescent conflict, with autonomy-related and academic-related conflicts emerged as the strongest predictors of overall parent-adolescent conflict. Interventions that strengthen family communication and address autonomy and academic pressures are recommended to reduce parent-adolescent conflict and promote adolescent well-being.

1. Introduction

The World Health Organization [WHO] (2023) defines adolescence as a critical developmental stage characterized by rapid physical, cognitive, emotional, and social changes that profoundly reshape an individual's interactions within family, school, and peer contexts. Grounding this transition in developmental and family systems frameworks, Steinberg (2014) argues that this period is inherently defined by increased autonomy-seeking, identity exploration, and a structural renegotiation of family roles. The implication of this systemic shift is that parent-adolescent conflict should not be viewed as an isolated behavioral problem, but rather as an expected consequence of a changing family ecosystem.

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Expanding this view to the broader environment, Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Magnusson and Stattin (2006) introduce a socio-ecological perspective, demonstrating that adolescent behavior and relational dynamics are simultaneously shaped by immediate micro-systems-like family, peers, and schools-and macro-systems like cultural norms. Taken together, these theoretical perspectives converge on a critical conceptual implication: parent–adolescent conflict is an inherently multifaceted phenomenon that cannot be adequately understood by focusing solely on individual or family characteristics, but instead requires a comprehensive evaluation of the broader social and cultural structures embedding the family unit.

Laursen and Collins (2009) and Steinberg (2014) describe parent-adolescent conflict as a normative, universal feature of family life that typically crystallizes around issues of academic performance, autonomy, household responsibilities, peer relationships, and communication patterns. While occasional, constructive disagreements foster vital problem-solving skills and negotiation competence, Branje (2018), Neville et al. (2025), and Zhang et al. (2022) caution that frequent, intense, or poorly regulated conflict is strictly tied to negative psychosocial outcomes, including heightened depressive symptoms, externalizing behaviors, and academic difficulties.

Strengthening this diagnosis, Branje (2018) highlights that chronic conflict erodes fundamental family cohesion, emotional well-being, and wider peer relationships—a vulnerability that becomes acute when supportive buffering mechanisms like parental warmth, monitoring, and open communication are absent. Across these empirical studies, there is clear consensus that conflict itself is not inherently maladaptive; rather, its developmental consequences depend entirely on its frequency, intensity, and the underlying quality of the parent-adolescent relationship. The methodological implication here is clear: empirical investigations must look beyond the mere occurrence of conflict and instead focus deeply on its specific sources, expressive intensity, and relational contexts.

When mapping specific flashpoints, Gao et al. (2025) and Laursen and Collins (2009) consistently identify academic issues—specifically homework, school performance, and high educational targets—as primary contributors to domestic friction. Research by Smetana (2011) and Hill and Tyson (2009) expands on this by indicating that excessive parental pressure actively aggravates family conflict when adolescents perceive these academic expectations as functionally unattainable. This dynamic carries a profound psychological implication: when expectations outpace an adolescent's perceived capability, it damages their sense of efficacy and transforms academic support into a relational threat.

Reflecting this trend within a specific cultural framework, Yadeta et al. (2014) and Zinabie (2015) observe a highly similar pattern in Ethiopia, documenting that academic performance and school-related obligations represent dominant, everyday sources of family tension. This striking convergence between international and Ethiopian literature implies that academic expectations function as a relatively universal source of parent–youth conflict, transcending distinct levels of industrialization or cultural organization. However, divergence appears regarding the relative weight of these domains over time; while some researchers isolate academic pressure as the single strongest predictor of friction, Brown and Larson (2009) and Steinberg (2014) argue that autonomy and peer-related concerns become equally or more influential as youth mature. The implication of these shifting priorities is that conflict domains do not operate in a vacuum, but dynamically morph alongside the adolescent's evolving developmental stage and immediate sociocultural milestones.

Laursen and Collins (2009), Smetana (2011), and Steinberg (2014) argue that autonomy and household responsibilities serve as prominent domains of conflict, driven by adolescents' increasing desire for independence. This shift frequently leads to disagreements over decision-making, personal freedom and daily chores as parents attempt to maintain structure and authority—an evolutionary tension that implies a critical developmental transition where family power structures must adapt. Regarding daily routines, Eshete and Shewasinad (2020) and Getachew et al. (2025) observe that disputes over household chores, time management, and family rules are generally less intense than academic conflicts but remain recurring negotiation zones. Ultimately, Steinberg (2014) links these findings to developmental theories, implying that peak adolescent conflict is not a sign of relationship failure, but a normative, necessary renegotiation of behavioral authority.

Nevertheless, the prominence of household responsibilities appears to be context-dependent. As Laursen and Collins (2009) point out, settings where adolescents are expected to contribute substantially to family survival and daily obligations report significantly higher levels of household-related conflict than highly individualistic societies. The cultural implication here is that structural expectations surrounding family survival and duty redefine what families fight about, meaning that chores are viewed not just as tasks, but as measures of respect, filial piety, and familial alignment.

Although Brown and Larson (2009), Laursen and Collins (2009), Smetana (2011), and Steinberg (2014) widely recognize peer influence and communication failures as major drivers of conflict internationally, their exact expressions differ across distinct social structures. In collectivist settings, Yadeta et al. (2014) demonstrate that parents heavily prioritize academic achievement and concrete household contributions over peer-related social concerns, meaning that peer friction is often subsumed under other domains.

Furthermore, Yadeta et al. (2014) reveal that communication deficits often function as an invisible, underlying engine that intensifies disagreements across multiple domains rather than acting as an isolated issue. This carries the critical implication that the boundaries separating conflict domains are fluid and blurred; ineffective communication serves as a vulnerability multiplier, allowing minor friction in academics or chores to rapidly escalate into deep relational crises. Consequently, researchers who examine these domains in total isolation risk underestimating their highly interdependent nature.

When looking at demographic variables, empirical findings remain highly fractured. Laursen and Collins (2009), Mastrotheodoros et al. (2019), Smetana (2011), and Tanni et al. (2021) report minimal direct effects of gender, parental occupation, education, income, or family structure on the raw rates of parent–adolescent conflict. Mirroring these international trends, Ethiopian studies by Eshete and Shewasinad (2020) and Getachew et al. (2025) generally report non-significant direct demographic effects.

In sharp contrast, however, Amato and Cheadle (2008), Conger et al. (2010), and Steinberg (2014) have documented elevated conflict levels within single-parent households and socioeconomically disadvantaged families. To reconcile these contradictions, Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Magnusson and Stattin (2006) note that these structural associations are almost always indirect, operating through the mediating lenses of parenting practices, family cohesion, and localized cultural coping norms. Similarly, while Laursen and Collins (2009) and Neville et al. (2025) consistently isolate early adolescence as a universal period of heightened conflict frequency, general evidence regarding age and gender interactions remains mixed. The overarching implication of these inconsistencies is that demographic variables do not act as direct, linear determinants of conflict; instead, they function as complex, contextual moderators, pointing to a profound need for deeply localized, context-specific investigations.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study integrates Smetana's (2011) Social Domain Theory and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory to examine parent–adolescent conflict in Ethiopian secondary schools.

According to Smetana (2011), conflict arises from a boundary mismatch: adolescents view everyday issues as personal matters requiring autonomy, whereas parents view them as areas under parental jurisdiction. Laursen and Collins (2009) and Smetana (2011) note that this friction manifests across specific domains, including academic expectations, autonomy, peers, chores, and communication. The critical implication is that adolescent conflict is a normative negotiation of authority boundaries rather than a sign of relationship failure.

To account for contextual variations, Bronfenbrenner (1979) demonstrates that these immediate family interactions (the microsystem) are indirectly shaped by broader ecological layers, such as parental education, occupation, income, and cultural norms. The theoretical implication is that conflict domains and demographic factors cannot be evaluated in isolation. Blending these frameworks allows this study to extend Western-developed models to the unique sociocultural environment of Ethiopian schools, showing how macro-systemic pressures filter down into everyday family friction.

When it comes to research gaps, despite extensive literature on parent–adolescent conflict, important knowledge gaps remain, particularly in low-income sub-Saharan African settings. While existing evidence maps various conflict domains—such as autonomy, academic expectations, peer relationships, communication patterns, and household responsibilities—the majority of these studies have been conducted in Western and Asian societies. Because Western individualistic frameworks and Asian family dynamics differ substantially from the collectivist, interdependent, and multi-layered family structures found in Ethiopia, the generalizability of existing international models to Ethiopian families remains highly limited (Habtamu, 2002; Hofstede, 2011).

Within the Ethiopian context, empirical research remains scarce, fragmented, and narrow in scope. Past studies have predominantly focused on parent–youth communication specifically related to sexual and reproductive health, leaving broader systemic dimensions of family conflict under-researched. Although the works by Yadeta et al. (2014) and Zinabie (2015) identified academic demands, disciplinary expectations, and household duties as potential sources of tension, these frictions have largely been investigated in isolation rather than within a single

comprehensive analytical framework. Similarly, while Eshete and Shewasinad (2020) and Getachew et al. (2025) documented demographic characteristics-such as parental education, occupation, household income, and family structure-as potential correlates of conflict, their relative predictive weight and structural interactions remain poorly understood. Furthermore, quantitative studies that simultaneously examine multiple conflict domains among early adolescents, particularly students transitioning through Grades 9 and 10, are notably lacking in the local literature.

Addressing these empirical gaps requires shifting research attention from the heavily studied capital city of Addis Ababa to regional towns like Debre Markos, where distinct sociocultural and economic transitions are actively unfolding. Consequently, Nigus Tekle-Haimanot Secondary School provides an ideal, highly justifiable setting for this investigation due to its unique institutional position as the primary melting pot of urban and rural student demographics in the area.

As one of the largest secondary schools in Debre Markos Town, the school draws an exceptionally diverse student population from both the urban center and its surrounding rural Woredas, a dynamic recently accelerated by students migrating due to regional conflicts. This convergence creates a highly complex, heterogeneous setting where varied socio-demographic backgrounds, distinct home environments, and the psychological weight of conflict-induced displacement all intersect. Nigus Tekle-Haimanot Secondary School therefore serves as a remarkable, comprehensive environment where shifting parental expectations regarding academic achievement, household labor, and behavioral autonomy can be evaluated amidst profound structural and situational family stressors.

Despite these compelling institutional dynamics and the clear need for localized data, no previous empirical study has systematically investigated the sources and predictors of parent-adolescent conflict in this specific setting. Therefore, the present study directly addresses these theoretical, empirical, and contextual gaps by comprehensively evaluating academic, autonomy, peer, household, and communication conflict domains, alongside their demographic predictors, among Grade 9 and Grade 10 students at Nigus Tekle-Haimanot Secondary School. By generating locally grounded, context-specific evidence, this study aims to inform culturally responsive family, school, and counseling-based interventions designed to strengthen family communication, improve domestic conflict management, and promote adolescent psychosocial well-being, while simultaneously expanding the broader empirical understanding of parent-adolescent dynamics in Ethiopia. Accordingly, the present study aims to:

1. Identify the dominant sources of parent-adolescent conflict among adolescents across academic, autonomy, peer relationship, household responsibility, and communication domains.
2. Analyze demographic differences in parent-adolescent conflict according to adolescent gender, grade level, parental education, parental occupation, family structure, and family income.
3. Determine the relative contribution of each conflict domain to the overall parent-adolescent conflict.

3. Method

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional quantitative design to investigate the sources and predictors of adolescent-parent conflict among Nigus Tekle-Haimanot secondary school students in Debre Markos Town. This design was deemed appropriate because it allows the assessment of the prevalence, patterns, and relationships among study variables at a single point in time without manipulation.

3.2. Sampling and Sample Size Determination

The target population comprised all regular students enrolled in Grade 9 and 10 at Nigus Tekele-Haimanot secondary school during the 2026 academic year. A stratified random sampling technique based on grade level and sex was employed to ensure proportional representation of both Grade 9 and Grade 10 students. Within each stratum, simple random sampling (lottery method) was applied on the official student roster obtained from the school administration. Each eligible student was assigned a unique identification number to ensure transparency and randomness in selection. With regard to sample size determination, the required sample size was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where, n is the sample size

N is the population size and

e is the level of precision (acceptable margin of error at 5% (STD value of .05)

A 95 % confidence level, $P = .5$ are assumed for equation

Given: $N=987$, $e=.05$, $987/1+987(.0025)= 284.6 \approx 285$

Therefore, using the Yamane formula, the sample size for this study was determined. The total number of students enrolled in the 2026 academic year at NigusTekle-Haimanot Secondary School for Grades 9 and 10 was 987 (552 females and 435 males). Specifically, 570 students (301 females and 269 males) were enrolled in Grade 9, while 417 students (251 females and 166 males) were enrolled in Grade 10. Based on the sample size determination formula, a total of 285 participants were included in the study.

Table-1. Proportional Allocation of Participants by Grade Level and Sex ($n=285$).

Grade Level	Total Population	Sample Size	Male (Sample)	Female (Sample)
Grade 9	570	165	78	87
Grade 10	417	120	48	72
Total	987	285	126	159

A total of 285 questionnaires were initially distributed to the study participants. However, during the data screening process, nine questionnaires (five from male respondents and four from female respondents) were found to be incomplete and therefore excluded from the analysis. Consequently, 276 questionnaires were considered valid and used for the final data analysis. Of these valid responses, 121(43.8%) were obtained from male participants and 155(56.2%) were from the female participants. These valid questionnaires formed the basis for all subsequent statistical analyses conducted in the study.

Participants were not selected based on prior identification of parent–adolescent conflict; rather, the study assessed the occurrence and domains of conflict within the selected sample. Regarding the inclusion and exclusion criteria of the participants, the study included Grade 9 and Grade 10 students who were enrolled during the study period, lived with at least one parent or parental figure, and voluntarily consented to participate. Students who were absent during data collection, did not reside with a parent or parental figure were excluded from the study.

3.3. Data Collection Instrument

Data for this study were collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire designed to measure the sources of parent-adolescent conflict among secondary school students. Initially, the questionnaire was prepared in English then translated into Amharic using forward and backward translation procedures to maintain semantic equivalence. Discrepancies identified during translation were corrected through discussion among language experts. The questionnaire consisted of:

Section I: Demographic Characteristics

The first section of the questionnaire entails background information about the respondents. It included items measuring sex, grade level (9th and 10th), family structure (living with parents, single parent, relatives), parental education (no formal education, primary, secondary, TVET, diploma, degree and above), parental occupation (employed, self-employed, and unemployed), and estimated family income (high, low, and middle).

Section II: Sources of Parent-Adolescent Conflict

The second section of the questionnaire measured the sources of conflict between adolescents and their parents. The items were adapted from the Issues Checklist (Robin & Foster, 1989) and were modified to reflect culturally relevant issues within the Ethiopian context. The instrument was carefully adapted to ensure cultural relevance and contextual appropriateness for Ethiopian secondary school students. This section consisted of 40 items grouped into five major sub-domains:

- **Academic-Related Conflict (10-items):**-assessed disagreements concerning school performance, homework completion, examination results, school attendance, parental educational expectations, and future career plans.
- **Autonomy and Independence Conflict (8-items):**-measured disagreements related to adolescents' desire for independence, personal decision-making freedom, and individual choices.
- **Peer and Social Relationship Conflict (8-items):**-examined conflicts associated with friendships, peer influence, and participation in social activities.
- **Household Responsibility Conflicts (6-items):**-focused on disagreements regarding household chores, family duties, and time management at home.
- **Communication and Behavioral Issues (8-items):**- evaluated misunderstandings, perceived disrespect, rule-breaking behaviors, and communication barriers within the family.

Each item in this section was rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from: 1(Never), 2 (Rarely), 3(Sometimes), 4(Often), and 5 (Always). Negatively worded items were reverse-coded prior to analysis. Regarding scoring, higher mean scores indicated greater frequency of conflict within a particular domain. Subscale scores were computed by averaging items within each domain, and an overall conflict source score was calculated by combining all items in the section. This scoring procedure enabled both domain-specific and overall assessment of adolescent–parent conflict patterns.

3.4. Validity of the Instrument

To ensure the content validity of the 40-item Parent–Adolescent Conflict Questionnaire was evaluated by three experts in developmental psychology. Experts rated the relevance of each item using a four-point scale ranging from 1(not relevant) to 4 (highly relevant). The Item-Level Content Validity Index (I-CVI) was calculated as the proportion of experts rating an item as relevant (rating 3 or 4). Items with an I-CVI of 1.00 were retained, while items with lower values were revised. The Scale-Level Content Validity Index (S-CVI/Ave) was .91, indicating acceptable content validity.

On the other hand, construct validity of the Parent-Adolescent Conflict Questionnaire was examined using exploratory factor analysis. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .84, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant, $\chi^2(528)=2150.36$, $p<.001$, indicating the data were suitable for factor analysis(Bartlett, 1951). Principal component analysis with Varimax rotation extracted five factors corresponding to the theoretical dimensions of the scale. The factors explained 62.4% of the total variance, and all items loaded above .40 on their respective factors, supporting the construct validity of the instrument. On the other hand, to ensure internal consistency reliability of items, the Cronbach's alpha is calculated in Table 2 below.

Table-2. Reliability of the Parent-Adolescent Conflict Subscales.

Sub-scales	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha	Items deleted	Cronbach's alpha after deletion
Academic-Related Conflicts	10	.65	2 items	.82
Autonomy & Independence Conflicts	8	.92	no deletion	.92
Peer & Social Relationship Conflicts	8	.67	1 item	.79
Household Responsibility Conflicts	6	.68	2 items	.73
Communication & Behavioral Issues	8	.66	1 item	.85
Total scale	40	-	-	-

Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Thus, poorly designed items were revised or removed following pilot testing. The pilot study involved approximately 45 students from a secondary school outside the main study site in DebreMarkos Town to prevent contamination of the primary sample. However, 6 questionnaires were incomplete as a result only 39 secondary school students were included for the pilot study. After a certain arrangement was made, the Academic-Related Conflict subscale demonstrated good reliability ($\alpha=.82$), while the Autonomy and Independence Conflict subscale showed acceptable reliability ($\alpha=.92$). The Peer and Social Relationship Conflict subscale yielded ($\alpha=.79$), Household Responsibility Conflict produced ($\alpha=.73$), and Communication Issues demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha=.85$). All subscales exceeded the minimum acceptable threshold of .70, indicating satisfactory reliability.

Regarding the school where the pilot was conducted, it was conducted in a secondary school that was not included in the main study to avoid contamination of responses. The pilot school was selected because it shared comparable characteristics with the study school, including similar grade levels, curriculum structure, adolescent age groups, and

socio-demographic context. The pilot study was conducted primarily to assess instrument clarity, comprehensibility, and internal consistency before the main data collection.

3.5. Methods of Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 22 following preliminary data screening to check for missing values, normality, linearity, and multicollinearity. Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentages were used to analyze demographic variables. Moreover, mean was computed to identify the predominant domains of adolescent-parent conflict across domains. Differences in parent-adolescent conflict sources across demographic variables such as gender, grade level, parental education, family structure, parental occupation, and estimated family income were examined using independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA. Finally, multiple linear regression analysis was performed to determine the relative contribution of parent-adolescent conflict dimensions to the overall levels of parent-adolescent conflict. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

4. Results

4.1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the study participants to provide contextual information about the sample. Variables including sex, grade level, parental occupation, parental education, family income, and family structure were analyzed to describe the background characteristics of the adolescents included in the study.

Table 3. Demographic Characteristics (N = 276).

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Sex	Male	121	43.8
	Female	155	56.2
Grade Level	9th Grade	161	58.3
	10th Grade	115	41.7
Father's Occupation	Unemployed	9	3.3
	Employed	122	44.2
	Self-employed	145	52.5
Mother's Occupation	Unemployed	79	28.6
	Employed	62	22.5
	Self-employed	135	48.9
Father's Education	No Formal Education	6	2.2
	Primary Education	16	5.8
	Secondary	37	13.4
	Diploma	105	38.0
	TVET	57	20.7
	Degree and Above	55	19.9
Mother's Education	No Formal Education	25	9.1
	Primary Education	53	19.2
	Secondary	91	33.0
	TVET	58	21.0
	Diploma	44	15.9
	Degree and Above	5	1.8
Parental Income (ETB)	Low	148	53.6
	Medium	69	25.0
	High	59	21.4

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Family Structure	Mother Only	23	8.3
	Father Only	27	9.8
	Relatives	79	28.6
	Both Parents	147	53.3

The demographic profile of the 276 participants shows a slight predominance of females (56.2%) compared to males (43.8%). Most participants were in 9th grade (58.3%), while 10th grade students accounted for 41.7%.

Regarding parents' occupation, the majority were self-employed (52.5%), followed by employed fathers in formal sectors (44.2%), while a small proportion were unemployed (3.3%). For mothers, self-employment was also the most common occupation (48.9%), followed by unemployment (28.6%) and formal employment (22.5%). These findings indicate that self-employment is the predominant occupational status for both parents, with fathers having higher formal employment and mothers showing higher unemployment rates.

Analysis of parents' education and family income shows that fathers mostly held a Diploma (38%), followed by Technical and Vocational Education and Training [TVET] (20.7%) and degrees and above (19.9%), with only 2.2% having no formal education. Mothers primarily had secondary school education (33%), followed by TVET (21%), primary education (19.2%), and Diploma (15.9%), having no formal education (9.1%), with very few holding degrees (1.8%).

Regarding parental income, the majority of parents fell into the low-income category (53.6%), followed by those in the medium-income group (25.0%), while a smaller proportion of parents were categorized as high-income (21.4%).

Finally, family structure data revealed that over half of the participants (53.3%) lived with both parents, 28.6% lived with relatives, and smaller percentages lived with only the mother (8.3%) and father (9.8%).

4.2. Theme One: Dominant Sources of Parent–Adolescent Conflict Among Adolescents

This theme addresses the first objective of the study, which sought to identify the dominant sources of parent–adolescent conflict among adolescents across academic, autonomy and independence, peer relationship, household responsibility, and communication domains. Mean scores and standard deviations were used to determine the relative prominence of each conflict domain, with higher mean scores indicating more frequently experienced areas of disagreement between parents and adolescents.

Table 4. Mean Scores of Parent–Adolescent Conflict across Major Conflict Domains (N = 276).

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Academic-related conflict	276	3.13	4.63	3.826	.368
Autonomy related conflicts	276	2.63	4.38	3.318	.403
Peer relationship related conflict	276	2.29	3.86	3.056	.373
Household responsibility related conflict	276	2.00	4.50	3.377	.589
Communication related conflict	276	2.33	3.83	3.043	.452
Grand mean	276	2.94	4.03	3.343	.197

The findings presented in Table 4 indicate that the magnitude of parent–adolescent conflict varied across the five domains examined. Academic-related issues emerged as the dominant source of conflict, recording the highest mean score ($M=3.826$, $SD=.368$). This suggests that educational expectations, school performance, and academic responsibilities constitute the primary areas of disagreement between parents and adolescents.

Household responsibility-related issues represented the second most prominent source of conflict ($M = 3.377$, $SD = .589$), indicating that disagreements surrounding domestic duties and family obligations are also common among adolescents. Likewise, autonomy and independence-related issues showed a relatively high mean score ($M=3.318$, $SD=.403$), reflecting adolescents' increasing desire for self-determination and independent decision-making. In

comparison, peer relationship-related issues ($M=3.056$, $SD=.373$) and communication-related issues ($M=3.043$, $SD=.452$) exhibited comparatively lower mean scores, although they remained important sources of conflict.

4.3. Theme Two: Demographic Variations in Parent-Adolescent Conflict

This theme addresses the second objective of the study, which examined whether parent–adolescent conflict varies according to demographic characteristics. Differences in conflict levels were analyzed across gender, parental occupation, parental education, family income, and family structure.

Table 5. Independent Samples t-Test for Parent-Adolescent Conflict by Gender.

Variable		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Parent-Adolescent Conflict	Equal variances assumed	.504	.478	1.348	274	.179	.03223	.02390
	Equal variances not assumed			1.367	268.89	.173	.03223	.02358

Significant at $p < .05$

An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine whether parent–adolescent conflict scores differed significantly between male and female students. Prior to interpreting the t-test results, Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was performed to assess the assumption of homogeneity of variance. The results indicated that the assumption was met, $F(1, 274)=.50$, $p=.478$, suggesting that the variability of scores was similar across the two groups. The t-test for equality of means revealed that the difference in parent–adolescent conflict scores between males and females was not statistically significant, $t(274)=1.35$, $p=.179$. The mean difference of .032 indicates only a negligible variation between the groups, which is not practically meaningful.

Table 6. One-Way ANOVA Results for Demographic Variables.

Variable	SS Between	df Between	SS Within	df Within	F	p-value
Parental Occupation	15.219	28	130.327	247	1.030	.428
Parental Education	22.296	28	234.367	247	0.839	.702
Parental Income	33.312	28	277.601	247	1.059	.391
Family Structure	34.537	28	163.333	247	0.345	.793

Significant at $p < .05$

The one-way ANOVA analysis presented in Table 6 revealed that parent–adolescent conflict scores did not differ significantly with respect to parental occupation, $F(28, 247)=1.03$, $p=.428$. In other words, there were no statistically significant differences in conflict levels among adolescents from different parental occupation groups (e.g., unemployed, employed, and self-employed).

Similarly, the analysis of parental education showed no statistically significant differences among the groups (no formal education, primary, secondary, TVET, diploma, degree and above) with respect to parent-adolescent conflict, $F(28, 247)=.84$, $p=.702$. This implies that differences in the educational attainment of parents did not significantly influence the sources of parent-adolescent conflict.

The results further indicated that parental income (low, medium, and high-income groups) did not have a statistically significant effect on parent–adolescent conflict, $F(28, 247)=1.06$, $p=.391$. This suggests that differences in family economic status were not substantial enough to produce meaningful variation in the level of parent–adolescent conflict.

Moreover, the one-way ANOVA analysis revealed no statistically significant differences among family structure groups (living with a mother, father, both parents, relatives) with regard to parent-adolescent conflict, $F(28, 247)=0.345$, $p=.793$. This indicates that students living with a mother, father, both parents, and relatives reported similar levels of conflict with parents.

4.4. Theme Three: Relative Contributions of Conflict Domains to Overall Parent–Adolescent Conflict

This theme addresses the predictive role of different conflict domains in explaining overall parent–adolescent conflict. Thus, multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the extent to which academic issues, autonomy and independence issues, peer relationship issues, household responsibility issues, and communication issues contribute to adolescents' overall experiences of parent–adolescent conflict.

Table 7. Multiple Regression Predicting parent-adolescent conflict from factors of conflict.

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error	R ² Change	F change	df1	df2	Sig. Change	F	Durbin-Watson
1	.915 ^a	.837	.834	.08033	.837	347.131	4	271	.000		1.925

a. Predictors: (Constant), communication conflict, academic related conflict, house responsibility related conflict, autonomy related conflict, and peer related conflict.

b. Dependent Variable: parent-adolescent conflict

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the relative contributions of the five conflict domains—academic issues, autonomy and independence issues, peer relationship issues, household responsibility issues, and communication issues—to overall parent–adolescent conflict. The regression model was statistically significant, $F(4,271)=347.13, p<.05$. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.925 indicated that there was no autocorrelation among the residuals. The results revealed that the selected conflict domains significantly contribute to explain parent-adolescent conflict. The very high R^2 value (.837) indicates that the five conflict domains strongly explain 83.7% of the variance for the overall level of parent–adolescent conflict.

Table 8. Regression Coefficients Predicting Parent–Adolescent Conflict from Conflict Domains.

Predictor Variables	B	SE B	β	p
Constant	-5.67E-15	.000	—	1.000
Academic Issues	.242	.000	.452	.000
Autonomy issues	.242	.000	.495	.000
Peer related issues	.212	.000	.401	.000
Household issues	.121	.000	.362	.000
Communication issues	.182	.000	.417	.000

Dependent Variable: Parent–Adolescent Conflict.

UNB=unstandardized regression coefficient; SEB=standard error of B; STB =standardized coefficient, All predictors are significant at $p<.05$.

The results presented in Table 8 revealed that all five conflict domains significantly predicted overall parent–adolescent conflict. Among the predictors, autonomy and independence issues exerted the strongest influence ($\beta=.495$), indicating that conflicts related to adolescents' desire for independence contributed most substantially to overall parent–adolescent conflict. Academic issues also showed a strong positive contribution ($\beta=.452$), followed by communication issues ($\beta=.417$) and peer relationship issues ($\beta=.401$). Household responsibility issues demonstrated a comparatively moderate, yet significant, contribution ($\beta=.362$).

Overall, the findings suggest that autonomy and independence, academic expectations, and communication difficulties are the most influential predictors of parent–adolescent conflict.

5. Discussion

5.1. Dominant Sources of Parent-Adolescent Conflict among Adolescents

The academic-related conflict was the most prominent domain of disagreement between parents and adolescents ($M=3.826$), followed by household responsibilities ($M=3.377$) and autonomy-related issues ($M=3.318$), while peer relationships ($M=3.056$) and communication issues ($M=3.043$) exhibited relatively lower mean scores.

The finding that academic issues constituted the dominant source of parent–adolescent conflict is consistent with previous research. Existing studies have identified school-related matters, including academic performance, homework, and parental expectations, as common areas of disagreement between parents and adolescents (Gao et al., 2025; Laursen & Collins, 2009). This consistency may reflect parents' strong emphasis on educational achievement during adolescence. Empirical studies further indicate that parents' strong emphasis on academic success often creates pressure, leading to conflict when adolescents struggle to meet these expectations or perceive them as excessive (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Smetana, 2011). This pattern is also evident in Ethiopian contexts, where research has highlighted academic performance and school-related expectations as dominant areas of tension within families (Yadeta et al., 2014; Zinabie, 2015). These consistent findings across both international and local studies reinforce the centrality of academic concerns in shaping parent-adolescent conflict.

Furthermore, the predominance of academic-related conflict supports the Social Domain Theory, which posits that adolescents increasingly seek autonomy, whereas parents continue to exercise authority over educational decisions, creating disagreement regarding appropriate levels of parental involvement (Smetana, 2011).

Similarly, the prominence of household responsibility and autonomy-related conflicts is strongly grounded in developmental and empirical literature. Laursen and Collins (2009) alongside Steinberg (2014) widely characterize adolescence as a period of increasing desire for independence, which routinely leads to direct disagreements over decision-making boundaries and role expectations. Furthermore, Smetana (2011) demonstrates that conflicts over autonomy are entirely normative, reflecting adolescents' deliberate efforts to renegotiate authority and personal freedom while parents simultaneously attempt to maintain domestic structure and behavioral control. When parents attempt to enforce traditional rules regarding family labor or behavior monitoring, youth frequently interpret these demands as violations of their expanding personal domain rather than legitimate expressions of parental socialization. Consequently, the statistical significance of these variables confirms that the structural negotiation of relational boundaries remains a highly active driver of domestic friction within the changing local environment.

In addition, Eshete and Shewasinad (2020) along with Getachew et al. (2025) identify household responsibilities—such as chores, time management, and adherence to family rules—as recurring sources of conflict, noting that they represent everyday contexts in which expectations are actively negotiated. The convergence of these findings suggests that autonomy and household responsibilities are key domains where developmental changes and family expectations intersect, leading to increased conflict.

However, the relatively lower mean scores for peer relationships and communication issues show some inconsistencies from the broader literature. Unlike the present study, which found peer relationship and communication issues were relatively less prominent sources of conflict, previous studies have reported these domains as major contributors to parent–adolescent conflict (Smetana, 2011). This discrepancy may be attributed to contextual, cultural, or family-level differences that shape parent–adolescent interactions across settings. Communication problems, in particular, are often emphasized as a central mechanism underlying parent-adolescent conflict, as ineffective communication can exacerbate misunderstandings and intensify disagreements across multiple domains (Smetana, 2011). The lower prominence of these factors in the current findings may therefore reflect contextual variations. For example, literature suggests that in more collectivist settings, such as Ethiopia, parents may place greater emphasis on academic achievement and household responsibilities than on peer-related issues, thereby shaping the relative salience of different conflict domains (Yadeta et al., 2014).

5.1.1. Demographic Variations in Parent–Adolescent Conflict

While parent–adolescent conflict is widely acknowledged as a normative aspect of youth development, the intensity and frequency of these disputes are traditionally thought to be moderated by individual and structural characteristics within the family unit. Understanding how background variables influence these relational dynamics is crucial for identifying distinct household vulnerabilities and designing targeted, context-specific youth interventions. Consequently, this section evaluates how adolescent gender alongside key socioeconomic factors—including parental occupation, education, income, and family configuration—shape the overall domestic friction in the study area.

5.1.2. Influence of Adolescent Gender on Conflict Dynamics

The independent samples t-test results revealed that parent–adolescent conflict was not significantly influenced by gender, $t(274)=1.35$, $p=.179$. This finding indicates that male and female adolescents experience comparable overall levels of domestic friction, a pattern consistent with foundational cross-cultural literature. Laursen and Collins

(2009) and Smetana (2011) demonstrate that adolescent conflict is primarily driven by universal developmental milestones-such as autonomy-seeking and role negotiation-rather than gender-specific traits.

However, this result diverges from studies indicating that gender shapes specific conflict expressions. Steinberg (2014) observes that female adolescents frequently report higher friction regarding communication patterns and relational boundary violations, whereas male adolescents experience more conflict centered on behavioral control and rule enforcement. The methodological implication of this discrepancy is that while the total volume of conflict may be statistically identical across genders, the qualitative nature and thematic triggers of the disputes remain context-dependent.

In more traditional settings, rigid gender roles and localized societal expectations may influence how conflict is structurally expressed or reported by youth rather than altering its actual occurrence.

5.1.3. Socioeconomic and Structural Factors in Family Friction

The one-way ANOVA results revealed that parental occupation, parental education, household income, and family structure did not significantly affect parent–adolescent conflict scores. These findings align with empirical work by Tanni et al. (2021) and Mastrotheodoros et al. (2019), which suggests that demographic categories alone are insufficient predictors of family friction, underscoring instead the central role of proximal relational, behavioral, and developmental dynamics. Conversely, this lack of socio-demographic significance directly challenges classic economic stress models. For instance, Conger et al. (2010) and Amato and Cheadle (2008) argue that structural vulnerabilities-such as lower parental income, restricted educational attainment, or single-parent family configurations-inherently elevate conflict. According to their frameworks, these economic strains induce chronic parental stress, which subsequently erodes parenting warmth and diminishes consistent behavioral monitoring.

The critical theoretical implication of the present study's findings is that macro-level socioeconomic gradients do not automatically dictate the quality of micro-level family interactions. In the Ethiopian context, deeply embedded cultural norms, extended family cohesion, and protective communal parenting structures appear to act as vital psychological buffers. These social mechanisms successfully insulate the immediate household from the relational friction typically induced by economic or structural strains.

Furthermore, the absence of measurable differences across socio-demographic categories may reflect a degree of sample homogeneity within the regional population of Debre Markos Town, where shared community values regarding filial piety and educational advancement transcend individual income or occupational brackets. These discrepancies fundamentally underline the necessity of using context-specific, culturally grounded frameworks when interpreting how demographic variables moderate the intensity and manifestation of parent–adolescent conflict.

5.1.4. Relative Contributions of Conflict Domains to Overall Parent-Adolescent Conflict

The multiple regression analysis revealed that the five conflict domains-autonomy, academic demands, peer and social relationships, household responsibilities, and communication-collectively accounted for a substantial proportion of the variance in overall parent–adolescent conflict, $R^2 = .837$, $F(5, 270) = 277.41$, $p < .001$. This indicates that 83.7% of the variance in domestic friction is explained by these five proximal relational domains. Among these predictors, autonomy-seeking exerted the strongest unique influence ($\beta = .495$), followed closely by academic-related conflict ($\beta = .452$), communication-related issues ($\beta = .417$), peer relationship friction ($\beta = .401$), and household responsibility disputes ($\beta = .362$).

5.1.5. Autonomy Seeking as the Primary Catalyst for Domestic Friction

The finding that autonomy-induced friction operated as the most robust predictor of parent-adolescent conflict ($\beta = .495$) strongly aligns with the foundational developmental literature. For instance, Steinberg (2014) asserts that autonomy-related disputes frequently surface as primary drivers of family tension during adolescence, reflecting the youth's normative and accelerating push for behavioral independence, personal jurisdiction, and individual identity formation. As adolescents attempt to redraw boundary lines over what they perceive as personal choices, traditional parental authority is directly challenged, turning autonomy negotiation into the central axis of relational strain.

5.1.6. Academic Demands and High-Stakes Performance Expectations

Hill and Tyson (2009) as well as Smetana (2011) demonstrate that parental expectations regarding scholastic performance, homework completion, and future career security routinely generate intense domestic disagreements.

In line with their evidence, academic-induced conflict emerged in the present study as a highly significant contributor to family friction ($\beta = .452$). This friction is particularly acute when adolescents perceive parental guidance not as support, but as excessive psychological pressure. Furthermore, Laursen and Collins (2009) indicate that academic-related disagreements remain among the most frequently reported conflict domains globally, especially within regions characterized by competitive educational sorting and high-stakes transitions.

5.1.7. Communication Barriers and Relational Escalation

Laursen and Collins (2009) along with Smetana (2011) emphasize that ineffective interaction patterns—such as persistent misunderstandings, a lack of emotional openness, and poor listening habits—actively intensify domestic disagreements, frequently escalating minor daily missteps into severe relational crises. The current finding that communication-related conflict functioned as a key determinant of parent–adolescent friction ($\beta = .417$) directly supports this view. However, Steinberg (2014) offers a different perspective, often conceptualizing communication breakdowns as a secondary symptom or moderator of underlying structural conflict rather than a direct, primary predictor of total domestic friction.

5.1.8. Peer Affiliations and Changing Social Micro-Systems

Brown and Larson (2009) and Steinberg (2014) explain that as youth naturally reorient their time and emotional investment away from the family microsystem toward peer groups, parents frequently experience heightened anxiety regarding negative peer pressure, risky behaviors, and shifting moral influences. The significant unique variance explained by peer-related conflict ($\beta = .401$) is consistent with this sociological and psychological research. This anxiety manifests as direct conflict over friendship choices, unmonitored time use, and leisure activities. Conversely, Smetana (2011) challenges this direct prominence, arguing instead that peer influence typically plays a more distal, indirect role—primarily aggravating family conflict by altering the adolescent's internal behavioral standards rather than operating as an independent, primary friction domain.

5.1.9. Domestic Chores and the Negotiation of Household Responsibilities

Smetana (2011) indicates that routine disagreements over chores, curfews, and daily maintenance tasks yield lower relational intensity compared to highly salient domains like identity expression or personal autonomy. In the present model, household responsibilities represented the lowest, yet still statistically significant, unique contributor to parent–adolescent conflict ($\beta = .362$), which is consistent with this framework.

Nevertheless, Laursen and Collins (2009) present contrasting evidence, positioning household labor as a highly volatile and prominent source of chronic conflict. Their work highlights that this intensity is especially visible in collectivistic or agrarian-adjacent contexts where youth are structurally relied upon to contribute substantial functional labor to the family unit, causing severe friction when adolescents perceive these domestic demands as unfair or obstructive to their personal goals.

Generally, the highly elevated explanatory power in this study deviates from that trend and may point to a high degree of sample homogeneity within the town of Debre Markos, where shared community standards, uniform institutional structures, and tightly aligned cultural expectations regarding family roles minimize external noise, thereby amplifying the statistical clarity of these five primary conflict domains.

6. Study Limitations

This study relied exclusively on self-reported questionnaire data collected through a single instrument. Although this approach was appropriate for addressing the quantitative objectives of the study, the absence of multiple data sources may have limited the opportunity for data triangulation and a deeper contextual understanding of parent–adolescent conflict. Therefore, future studies may employ mixed-methods designs incorporating interviews, focus group discussions, or observational techniques to validate and enrich the survey findings.

7. Conclusion

This study investigated the sources and predictors of parent–adolescent conflict among students at Nigus Tekle-Haimanot Secondary School by comprehensively evaluating specific conflict domains alongside selected demographic characteristics. The empirical findings demonstrate that parent–adolescent conflict within this context is primarily driven by everyday developmental and relational domains rather than structural demographic variables.

Specifically, friction surrounding academic demands, household responsibilities, and adolescent autonomy emerged as the most prominent sources of domestic tension. This pattern reflects the complex challenges contemporary youth encounter as they attempt to balance filial obligations with an increasing desire for behavioral independence. Conversely, peer relationships and distinct communication issues exert a comparatively minor direct influence on the generation of conflict within the family unit.

Furthermore, structural demographic variables—including gender, parental occupation, maternal/paternal education, household income, and family configuration—demonstrated limited predictive value regarding overall conflict levels. This lack of statistical significance strongly suggests that parent–youth disagreements are a largely normative and universal feature of family life that transcends diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Ultimately, specific conflict domains play the central role in explaining variations in parent–adolescent friction, with autonomy-seeking and academic performance expectations operating as the most robust predictors. Taken together, these insights underscore the critical necessity of accounting for localized developmental transitions and family interaction patterns to design effective, context-specific conflict management frameworks and school-based youth interventions.

8. Recommendations

Based on the empirical findings and the theoretical frameworks guiding this study, several actionable recommendations are proposed.

In line with Social Domain Theory, because the findings demonstrate that parent–adolescent conflict is primarily driven by domain-specific boundary mismatches rather than demographic factors, interventions must directly target how families negotiate authority and personal jurisdiction. First, given that autonomy-seeking emerged as the most robust predictor of conflict, parents should transition from restrictive control to autonomy-supportive parenting practices. This involves gradually incorporating adolescents into domestic decision-making processes and providing guided independence. Recognizing an adolescent’s developing personal domain reduces relational tension and fosters mutual respect. Second, to address the high prevalence of conflict over household duties, families should establish clear, age-appropriate, and mutually agreed-upon behavioral boundaries. Rather than imposing unilateral rules, parents should involve youth in discussions regarding household contributions. This collaborative negotiation aligns with developmental needs, increasing the adolescent’s sense of ownership while decreasing behavioral resistance. Third, in light of the prominent friction surrounding academic demands, parents must avoid excessive psychological pressure that transforms educational tracking into a relational threat. Families should be encouraged to co-construct realistic academic goals with their children, focusing on constructive emotional support and process-oriented praise rather than unattainable performance benchmarks.

In line with a socio-ecological framework, managing parent–adolescent friction requires interventions that bridge the immediate family microsystem with broader institutional mesosystems and community macrosystems. First, secondary schools—and specifically counselors and teachers at institutions like Nigus Tekle-Haimanot Secondary School—should proactively facilitate collaborative academic environments. Second, macro-systemic community initiatives and local educational bureaus should invest in structured parenting education modules. These programs should focus on raising localized awareness regarding normative adolescent development, identity exploration, and changing relational dynamics. Providing parents with culturally responsive communication and conflict-resolution strategies helps mitigate domestic friction before it escalates into adverse psychosocial outcomes.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest associated with this study. All aspects of the research, including study design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation of results, were conducted objectively without any commercial or financial influences that could bias the findings.

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