

## THE DETERIORATION OF CHILDREN GROOMING CAUSED BY PARENT CONFLICT

Mehreen Akhtar, Saima Qureshi\*

Department of Education, School of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Pakistan.

Submitted June 14, 2024; Revised July 28, 2024; Accepted August 08, 2024; Published August 20, 2024

### ABSTRACT

The conflicts between parents can have a significant impact on their children, both emotionally and behaviourally. Children who witness their parent conflicts often face difficulties in their personal development and struggle to achieve success in life. The structure of the family plays a crucial role in a child's overall development, and intense conflicts can lead to divorce, separation, or even parents living together despite ongoing conflicts. In contrast, an ideal nuclear family living in harmony provides a more conducive environment for children's growth. When there is disruption in the relationship between husband and wife, it can have adverse effects on their children's psychological well-being. This can significantly impact their emotional growth and development. The negative impact on children manifests in various ways, such as feelings of sadness, confusion, fear of abandonment, guilt, misunderstanding, anger, loyalty conflicts, distress, and suffering. The children raised in two-parent households tend to be more successful. This is likely because two-parent households are generally more financially stable and can provide better support for their children. Additionally, the financially sound parents are more likely to raise successful children compared to single parents.

**Keywords:** Parental conflict, Deterioration, Children, Grooming, Impact.

\*Corresponding Author. E-mail: [saimalibr1@gmail.com](mailto:saimalibr1@gmail.com)

### INTRODUCTION

A strong husband and wife relationship is the foundation of a well-functioning household. When this relationship is disrupted, it can have negative effects on the parents' interactions with their children and the children's social and emotional well-being [1]. Research has shown that conflicts between parents can lead to uncooperative parenting and adjustment issues for children. For example, when fathers engage in

destructive conflicts, mothers may respond with distress, which can negatively impact their parenting. On the other hand, when mothers engage in destructive conflicts, it can lead to less supportive parenting.

A study found that 68% of children with low grades in secondary examinations experienced parental conflict at home. Mothers expressed various concerns regarding the conflict. The father's

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involvement positively impacts parenting and establishes a strong and trustworthy bond with the children. Children tend to emulate their parents and are influenced by their behaviors, resilience in challenging situations, and responses to the environment. It is clear that both parents play roles in parental conflict [2]. The relationship between husband and wife affects how they protect and support their children, how successful they are in various aspects of life, and their ability to provide for the family [3]. When the father, who plays a key role in nurturing these life skills in children, is absent, their development may suffer. Children who lose their fathers are more likely to engage in delinquent behavior, display anger and aggressiveness easily, associate with the wrong crowd, and become physically violent. Research supports the notion that children without both parents tend to perform poorly academically. This finding aligns with our observation that children's behavior is abnormal, and they achieve low grades in school. Father is like a shelter for the household, providing support and belief for children. When a father is absent, it creates a void that children struggle to cope with. They may worry about who will support the family and handle expenses. This uncertainty about income and taking care of siblings and single mothers can cause emotional distress for children. They try to fill this void with someone else, especially girls who are particularly connected to their fathers. This can make it difficult for them to form and maintain successful relationships. Children who lose their fathers often have a diminished sense of self, viewing themselves as fragile and flawed. They compare themselves to children from two-parent households and those with financial stability, which can result in feelings of disappointment and sadness unless they receive counselling. These children have low self-esteem and blame themselves for their

circumstances, feeling useless, unimportant, undervalued, and disadvantaged. They feel powerless, incompetent, and defenseless. Both mothers and fathers play a significant role in caring for and nurturing children. They serve as mentors, guiding and disciplining them. Children initially learn norms, values, and rules from their parents, who also help them address any mistakes or imperfections. This pattern is more pronounced in boys.

### **REASONS OF CONFLICT**

Sexual conflict involves issues such as sexual competence, frequency of sex, and level of dissatisfaction. Financial conflict relates to income and limitations in spending despite having a good income. Emotional conflict encompasses love, compassion, and possessiveness. Social conflict arises from issues like visits to relatives and friends, social gatherings, and the mixing of male and female guests. Spiritual and religious conflict can arise from differences or restrictions in practicing religious rites among different sects and religious groups [4, 5].

### **EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT**

Separation can have both short-term and long-term impacts on children's emotional and psychological development. Each child experiences separation differently, and these impacts are inevitable. However, there are ways to minimize the negative effects and help children become resilient. Children may experience a range of distressing emotions such as grief, confusion, fear of abandonment, guilt, anger, and conflict over loyalty. The absence of a father figure in the household can have a significant impact on children. In cases of intense conflict, children may also experience physical aggression. Many children also feel uncertain about their future [6].

It has been observed that some fathers continue to be involved and caring even after the separation. On the other hand, fathers

who are not involved may lose visitation rights. The children of caring fathers are less emotionally impacted by separation. These fathers make an effort to maintain a relationship with their children and earn their trust. In intact families, parents are always available for their children [7]. However, when parents separate, it can become challenging for children to decide with whom they will spend special occasions. This can lead to disagreements and distress. But with maturity and understanding, even after separation, children can still enjoy their special days [8].

#### **IMPACT ON HEALTH OF CHILDREN**

The children of divorced parents are more prone to health problems such as sickness, wounds, bruises, and accidents compared to children whose parents are married and living together. Additionally, children of divorced parents are more vulnerable to traumas and mental health issues. As a result, it's not surprising that divorce can lead to various psychological reactions in children, including rage, disappointment, anxiety, and sadness. Children living with single parents or frequently switching houses receive less

guidance from parents in their education, which can lead to lower academic achievement and grades [9].

#### **IMPACT OF EDUCATION**

The immediate repercussions of divorce for children include lower educational achievements, poor emotional adaptation, difficulties in social and psychological adjustment, and negative self-image. The long-term impacts can continue into adulthood, such as a diminished sense of emotional well-being, lower socioeconomic status, poorer physical health, and weaker bonds with parents, particularly fathers. These factors decrease the likelihood of children becoming successful individuals in their adult lives. The disadvantages of divorce and found that children who live with either a father or mother feel a sense of incompleteness in their mental, emotional, and social well-being. The impact of divorce on children's lives is significant, with studies showing that children of divorced parents often struggle to have successful future family lives and become successful parents themselves, with a high likelihood of their own divorces [10].



**Figure 1:** Reasons of conflict.



**Figure 2:** Effect of parental conflict on children.

They tend to marry partners with divorced parents. When only one partner is a child of divorced parents, the chances of divorce are lower compared to couples where both partners come from divorced families. The two-parent households have advantages because single-parent families have the added challenge of managing both finances and household responsibilities. Therefore, single parents often struggle to provide the same quality of life and stability for their children as intact families can. In Pakistan, an average of 100 divorce cases per day are recorded in the Family Court of Pakistan [11-13].

#### **IMPACT OF YOUNG CHILDREN**

Young children often feel confused when their parents argue, mistakenly believing that

their parents don't like each other and don't care about their well-being. They may blame themselves for the conflicts and think that they've somehow annoyed their parents. Teenagers, on the other hand, can become frustrated and angry when their parents get divorced and their lives change. They may hold one or both parents responsible for the breakup.

The transition from co-parenting to single parenting after a divorce requires many adjustments. The most single-parent households are led by females. Single parenting resulting from a spouse's divorce can have both positive and negative effects in the short and long term. In the short term, children may experience difficulties in their attitudes at home or in school as a response to

their parents' breakup. In the long term, these difficulties can manifest as struggles in forming and maintaining relationships during adolescence [14].

The wealthier urban families tend to provide better care for their children, which offsets the impact of the absence of one parent and the financial strain caused by divorce, compared to lower-income and middle-class single-parent families. Wealthy rural families, on the other hand, experienced an 88% reduction in income, which affected the children's access to food [15].

The challenges faced by single parents in raising children in a way that doesn't make them feel the absence of a father figure. Some children may become stronger as a result of adversity, while others may struggle to cope with life and experience failure. They may fear being judged by society and the painful questions they may have to answer. Therefore, the growth, care, and development of these children must be approached with great caution by single mothers, as they are at risk of developing mental health issues [16].

The trend of single parenting in Pakistan is increasing, despite societal norms and religious beliefs emphasizing cohesive co-parenting. The death of a spouse or divorce is a significant shock not only for mothers but also for children. Single mothers face the double duty of raising children and dealing with the challenges of divorce, while also combating the biased views of their community, which can affect the growth and development of their children. Working single mothers also face the challenge of balancing their job responsibilities with the care of their children in order to raise successful individuals [17].

### **PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT**

Parental conflicts have a negative impact on children's success. Research has found that less affluent parents who receive financial help have fewer disputes. Elite parents, on the other hand, believe that social and

psychological support can help resolve conflicts within the household. This has resulted in a higher risk of psychological problems for parents, which in turn affects the behavior of their children. Anxiety is particularly harmful to children and their developing minds. Other factors contributing to conflicts include unemployment, children being absent from school, and a lack of household help.

### **PHYSICAL IMPACT**

The behavior of parents significantly affects the growth of their children. In a study involving many households living under the same roof, researchers found that intervening and implementing initiatives that improve communication during parental disputes can lead to more positive parenting and better upbringing of children. Both parents' involvement in such initiatives has been found to be beneficial in enhancing the positive impact on parenting activities. Disputes between parents can have different effects on each parent's parenting style. If the husband's disputes are disruptive, the wife's negative responses can contribute to children developing pessimistic feelings, supporting the spillover hypothesis. Disagreements between spouses are common in many households and can lead to feelings of misery, sadness, disturbance, and hostility in children. Unresolved disputes, arguments, neglect, and excessive praise are common characteristics of households and are hidden causes of psychological issues in children [18]. Behaviors such as shouting, throwing things, and being aggressive can hinder children's growth and make them feel psychologically unsafe. They may even blame themselves for the conflicts. These conflicts can continue to affect them into adulthood, as research has shown that 50% of psychological problems start before the age of 14. The family is the primary social setting for a person, and the relationship between parents is its foundation. The intensity,

context, and duration of conflicts all impact how children perceive the situation. The children develop their cognitive analysis skills and coping mechanisms based on the attributes and circumstances of conflicts. Their psychological well-being is significantly affected by the disputes and stress resulting from parental conflicts. Conflicts between spouses regarding their children can have significant impacts on school life and academic performance. Negative peer associations, physical health issues, substance abuse, strained relationships, decreased academic achievements, limited job opportunities, increased likelihood of aggression and physical confrontation, as well as feelings of sadness, worry, and depression are some of the consequences that children may experience due to parental conflicts. Establishing a positive relationship between spouses, implementing effective conflict management strategies, and prioritizing the well-being of the child are essential measures [19].

These disputes between parents are crucial factors in a child's psychological well-being, development, and behavior. It has been found that the impacts of these disputes can vary depending on the gender of the child. The complex dynamics of gender roles within the relationship between the parents and the child's adjustment. In households where the parents live together, it is important to address the strategies employed during disputes and to consider the psychological implications for the child.

A study conducted on children in Holland, living with both parents, identified a phenomenon known as spillover, where conflicts from one individual are transferred to another within the household. The "conflict involvement" exacerbates disputes, leading to charged and aggressive interactions. "Withdrawal" was also an ineffective tactic as it resulted in a lack of

interaction, further prolonging the dispute. On the other hand, "issue resolution" proved to be an effective approach, facilitating compromise and empathetic understanding [20].

### **SOCIAL IMPACT**

It is worth noting that even infants as young as six months old can be negatively affected by parental conflicts. The 19-year-old children who live with married couples are sensitive to and deeply impacted by their parents' disputes. These disputes can have significant consequences on children's lives, including the development of eating disorders, mimicking negative behaviors, and adopting a pessimistic outlook on life. Conflict triggers may include the use of inappropriate language, disrespectful behavior, threats of leaving the relationship, violent confrontations, avoidance of addressing the conflict, and giving in to unreasonable demands. Ideally, children benefit from a household where both parents maintain a harmonious relationship and understand each other. However, when disputes persist, children's lives can become a nightmare. It is common for parents to continue living together despite their conflicts for the sake of their children's well-being [21]. The imbalance between work and personal life negatively affects parental relationships and has a significant impact on the growth, upbringing, and development of children. Couples who have the responsibility of caring for and raising their babies often experience higher chances of conflict compared to couples without children. The couples with children face the additional burden of managing household responsibilities, taking care of the children, and earning a living. As a result, some couples end up living under the same roof but in separate rooms. In some cases, they have made the decision to separate but are still legally married, awaiting a court verdict. This arrangement has certain advantages,

however, it presents challenges when it comes to revealing the separation to the children. Informing the children about the separation can be confusing and unsettling, potentially hindering their growth and development. Even if the separation is not explicitly disclosed, children may still become aware of it through external sources or anticipate conflicts. This constant exposure to conflicts adversely affects children, making them emotionally unintelligent and easily irritable. Furthermore, it impacts their relationships and diminishes their chances of success in both personal and professional life, such as when working in an organization [22].

#### **IMPACT ON KIDS' DEVELOPMENT**

The parents who live together but are separated can help their children adjust to the fact that they will not live together in the future. Sudden separation can have a devastating impact on children, causing deep sadness. It is important for parents to avoid expressing anger and resentment in front of their children, as this can make it harder for them to cope. The parental situation has a significant impact on children's behavior, development, and performance, particularly in relation to psychological problems. They may experience difficulties in their relationships with peers (6%), hyperactivity (10%), attitude problems (8%), and emotional issues (10%).

Some married couples choose to live in separate rooms within the same house for various reasons. This could be due to financial constraints, as they may not have enough money to buy a second home. It was suggested that some couples wait for a financial settlement to provide a stable environment for their children and ensure their well-being. Living in separate rooms allows parents to work on repairing their relationship and minimize the negative impact of conflicts on their children's upbringing. While they may reside in the

same house, they lead separate lives. They establish a schedule to spend time with their children and meet their needs. Many parents choose not to disclose their differences to their children in order to protect them. An open communication with both spouse and children, as well as avoiding minor arguments, requires patience. The living together without conflicts, especially in the presence of children, can have a more positive impact on them. Children feel the weight of these conflicts and may develop feelings of inferiority as they try to navigate questions from their peers about their parents' relationship issues, which can hinder their chances of success in life. A research has shown that the highest divorce rates are among children whose parents divorced due to an unhealthy relationship, followed closely by children whose parents stayed together but had poor relationships. Children of separated parents may struggle with educational attainment, psychological issues, and attitude problems. The separation has a negative impact on children's health. In fact, nearly 30% of mothers in joint custody arrangements experience burnout and depression [23, 24] 68 % of couple have conflict. It indicates that this conflict typically becomes evident at a later stage in the relationship, usually after 35 years of the female partner. In earlier stages, mothers often try to accommodate their partner's shortcomings, but as the relationship progresses, it becomes increasingly challenging to do so.

#### **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, parental conflict is a prevalent issue in society. However, the structure of the family often discourages divorce, resulting in couples staying together in a complex and unbearable relationship. This can negatively affect a child's well-being, development, growth, and overall upbringing. The adverse influences and behaviors can stem from physical, emotional, mental, social, and

religious factors, leading to feelings of embarrassment and guilt for the child. In Pakistan, parental conflicts are on the rise, and this is having a significant impact on children at various stages of their lives. During infancy, children may suffer from a lack of trust in their parents due to the parents' inability to provide them with enough time and attention. As they grow into childhood and adolescence, they may develop feelings of inferiority and confusion about their own identity. In their teenage years and early adulthood, they may experience feelings of despair and disdain as they struggle to become independent adults. Furthermore, children whose parents are in conflict often

lag behind in terms of their growth, development, cognitive abilities, social skills, and grooming of attitude and behavior. Consequently, these children are less likely to be successful in their future lives.

**Author(s) Contribution:** Conceptualization, A. Mehreen; writing-up, review and editing Q. Saima.

**Funding:** Nill

**Ethical Approval:** NA

**Conflict of Interest:** There is no conflict of interest.

**Consent for Publication:** All authors approved the manuscript for publication and agreed to be responsible for all aspects of this article.

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