

## Reciprocities of Children's Perception of Parental Discord, Family Interaction and the Role of Parental Approaches: Through a Socio-Cultural Lens

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### ABSTRACT

Familial socialization occurs in accordance with culturally accepted social norms. Family differences of opinion are bound to be resolved in accordance with these inbuilt value systems. Furthermore, it has been observed that constructive parental approaches can lead to beneficial changes in children's perceptions of parental conflict (Barthassat, 2014). Socio-cultural interactions shape behaviours and play critical roles in children's overall development. Like in most situations, the first mode of interaction between children would have occurred in front of parents or caretakers. Discord between parents impedes children's social development. Thus, this narrative review discusses the critical aspects of parental conflict and familial interaction against a socio-cultural backdrop. Although few studies suggest a direct cultural impact on parental conflict and social interaction, such evidence is scattered throughout the literature. Those potential consequences for children and families are observed and reported in this narrative review. The significance and necessity of constructive parental approaches to assisting families in overcoming disruptive family environments are discussed. There are several indications for an inter-complementary relationship could exist between children's perceptions of parental discord, family interaction, and parental approaches. The growth and welfare of children, families, and individuals may be aided by knowing these specifics.

**Keywords:** *Perceived Parental Discord, Familial-Interaction, Parental Approach and Socio-Cultural Perspective*

Children's constructive or destructive behavioural outcomes are inextricably linked to family learnings and interactions with their parents (Cummings & Davies, 2002; Chaudhry & Shabbir, 2018; Barthassat, 2014; Harold & Sellers, 2018). Families are the foundation of all teaching (Cummings & Davies, 2002). Most children's first experiences with emotions and behaviours occurred before their parents or care-takers. This could be the first indication of social interaction. Parental behaviours, personality, and parenting style all influence their children's externalizing or internalizing behaviours (Harold & Sellers, 2018).

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## **Reciprocities of Children's Perception of Parental Discord, Family Interaction and the Role of Parental Approaches: Through a Socio-Cultural Lens**

Consequently, parental engagement with dispute resolutions has an essential effect in children's views of conflicts. Prior studies concentrated on the children's adjustment problems and psychopathology as a result of parental discord (Grych & Fincham, 1990; Cummings & Davies, 1990; 2002; Van Eldik. et al., 2020). The effects of marital dissolution and the child's negative behavioural outcomes were discussed previously in the literature. A more intense emotional climate at home may result in fewer interactions between family members. Such parental behaviours have a large influence on children. Alternatively, if parents are committed to communicating their viewpoint and resolving interparental conflict, children may benefit (Cummings & Davies, 2002; Barthassat, 2014). Bernet et al. (2016) used the DSM-5 (*child-affected parental distress*) to conclude that the susceptibility of not being able to communicate parental conditions might be possible amplifiers for the formation of maladaptive issues in children. As a result, conflict resolution is often referred to as "meaningful communication" or "interaction" in order to reduce adversity. Several studies have found that children who have witnessed marital strife have fewer interactions (Cummings & Davies, 2002). Despite the fact that all of this information relates to perceived parental discord and social conflict. This review seeks to study the link between parental disagreement and a children's interaction with their family. Cultural implications for children affected by parental conflict should also be considered. Different families from various socio-cultural backgrounds react differently to conflicts. This review therefore begins by concentrating on the socio-cultural aspects of parental conflict and familial interactions. Later in the review, the parental approaches to conflict are discussed.

### **2. Children's Perception of Parental Discord through a Socio-Cultural Lens:**

#### ***Perception of Parental Discord:***

Children have distinct personalities and identities. They also have strong opinions. As members of a social system, children must have an opinion about what is going on in their family, whether it is positive or negative. As a result, their "discernment of the disharmonious conflict between parents could be termed parental discord". Perceived parental discord is a term used frequently in the literature to describe how children view disputes of parents. It is referred to as "a child affected by parental relationship distress" in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-5(CAPRD)*. It is being researched further in terms of various socio-cultural correlates (Bernet, 2016). Children's development in the areas of cognition, emotion, behaviour, socialization, and academics are frequently mediated by intense and unresolved inter-parental discord (Cummings & Davies, 2002; Harold & Sellers, 2018).

#### ***Socio-Cultural Perspective on Parental Discord: An Overview***

In the past, studies on the perception of parenting behaviours have been shown to interact with cultural ecology. The attribution of parental behavioural outcomes to child discord is culturally specific (Cummings & Davies, 2002). Another paradigm is the processing of ethnic conflict variation. It is critical to investigate the cultural specificities and universality of potential causes of discord, as this will reveal the precise process involved in the avoidance and management of discord (Cummings & Davies, 2002). There are several parameters that constitute cultural and social influence when it comes to attribution of inter-parental conflict. One such case was the influences of "parent-child interaction on the perception of inter-parental issues". Their relationship is built on attachment, nurturing, and transparency. Cultural norms and values define these terms (Vendlinski, 2006). In that case, parents' lack of warmth, amicability, and, in some cases, physical affection makes perceived

## **Reciprocities of Children's Perception of Parental Discord, Family Interaction and the Role of Parental Approaches: Through a Socio-Cultural Lens**

parental discord of children more vulnerable. Even if they are having marital problems, parents who show care and attention to their children will be able to effectively control their children's behavioural problems. Numerous studies have found that sociocultural influences impact the degree and type of externalizing and internalizing behavioural outcomes in children (Harold, 2016).

Children are influenced by sociocultural learning involving values, especially when they witness their parents' stressors. These encounters help children form criteria for differentiating between their parents' productive and harmful conflict behaviours. Their prior experiences and learned cultural values would be beneficial in this regard. Frequent exposure to destructive behaviour by parents impedes children's development, whereas constructive behaviour by parents is rewarding. These kinds of distinctions necessitate cultural adjustments and later advances for behavioural modification in children (Cummings & Davies, 2002). People in general, especially parents, believe it is their responsibility to protect children and pay special attention to their development in collective societies. Even when their marital relationship is strained, they accept parental responsibility for resolving the conflict. If not, they try to persuade children as to why they were forced to live in such a bad situation at home. People who live in an individualistic society, on the other hand, believe otherwise (Berk, 2006). These cultural differences and are also the best examples of public policies. According to Laura E. Berk, "the complex nature of culture in the coming days will cause individualism to escalate," despite the fact that cross-national differences will remain the same. Such intentions would then influence children's behaviour related to parental discord in any social unit.

The association between gender roles and discordant behaviours is yet another culturally influenced behaviour. For example, in some cultures, fathers actively participate and engage in their children's play, spending quality time with them, whereas mothers serve as caretakers (Berk, 2006; Zagefka et al., 2020). "So, the amount of time each parent gets to spend with their children differs significantly". A child's attachment to each parent may differ in strength. In that case, if there is any chance of interparental conflict, the father-child relationship will be the most affected (Harold & Sellers, 2018). According to anthropological evidence, there is a socio-cultural interaction in child-rearing practices and parenting style (Cowan & Cowan, 2002; Feldman, Masalha, & Redikman-Eiron, 2010) Long-lasting cultural interferences are maintained by marital discord and parenting practices. As in a discordant family, a lack of emotional expression leads to a low temperament (Grych & Fincham, 1990). If the parent comprehends the larger conflict, they will comprehend the situation at home and act accordingly. This could be reflected in their child-rearing process. Following that, the child would be able to adjust well to conflict stimuli (Chaudhry, M. K., & Shabbir, 2018). Evidence suggests that parents encourage their children to regulate their emotions and discourage them from expressing them (Berk, 2006). As a result, children's reactions to a potential threat in the form of parental discord may not be direct, and they may be calmer and more composed while witnessing parental issues or even on the verge of a marital separation (Cummings & Davies, 2010). Similarly, children's perceptions of parental discord have a variety of sociocultural implications. These cultural influences must be considered when developing awareness strategies.

### **3. Socio-Cultural Mechanisms Accounting for the Association between Parental Discord and Familial Interaction**

#### ***Familial Interaction and Children:***

Most people define social interaction as "an act of mutual give and take involving two or more individuals within the family." Hence, it also is categorized as social communication. (Anderson, 2000). In other words, it is a natural symbiotic relationship. Family functions as a social gathering as well. Also, "Conversations with others have a big influence on our behaviour and values". Socialization processes are critical for the development of children (Feldman, Masalha, & Redikman-Eiron, 2010). Acquiring and strengthening social skills to interact with others begins within families (Kouros, Cummings, & Davies, 2010). Our parents witness our very first social reference act. Social behaviours, in general, play an important role in human progress.

#### ***Familial Interaction and Perception of Parental Discord***

In discordant families, interaction is generally low, according to observational studies (Cummings & Davies, 2002). Children learn to interact with others in order to adjust and develop later in life. It's imperative to develop social skills if one wants to succeed in life. Aggression and absence of emotional reactivity are examples of contradictory behaviours among parents. These are poor conflict resolution strategies. There is a good chance that these behaviours will be emulated by children, and make them difficult to interact with others as a result.

These imitations often lead to other unconstructive behavioural outcomes rather than just copying the behaviour (Cummings & Davies, 2002). "Even so, if parents could make certain socio-cultural revisions, their children's behavioural aftereffects would strengthen." (Estlein, 2021). Fighting between parents in front of their children is frowned upon in most cultures. Most parents try to avoid such behaviours. Simultaneously, their effective interactions with spouses will teach the child to respond to family disturbances constructively (Barthassat, 2014).

Evidence from the literature suggests that children experience feelings of isolation and helplessness as a result of poor communication within the family due to parental conflict. They will not take part in the open expression of frequent conflicts. Few interactions involving conflict were seen among kids, particularly boys as opposed to girls. Reduced social interaction is frequently cited as a cause of children's maladaptive behavioural patterns (Barthassat, 2014; Harold & Sellers, 2018). Children displaying anger and tantrums, for example, could be a way for parents to shift their attention away from the tensions caused by discord. Emotional expression varies by culture (Emery, 1982; Grych & Fincham, 1990). Thus, studying these emotional reactions to family discord in different cultures would provide a more vivid picture.

Parenting style is also thought to influence how parents interact with their children. Based on how children create their own reality as a result of parental conflict (Estlein, 2021) According to the literature, the use of disciplinary tactics by the parent is more common with the same-sex child than with the opposite-sex child. The process-oriented approach discussed the moderated mediation pathways of cultural influence on the various disciplinary styles of parents (Cummings & Davies, 2002; Feldman, Masalha, & Redikman-Eiron, 2010; Barthassat, 2014).

## **Reciprocities of Children's Perception of Parental Discord, Family Interaction and the Role of Parental Approaches: Through a Socio-Cultural Lens**

Previous research has shown that familial interaction and parental discord are mutually beneficial. A family experiences inter-parental conflict, and because a family is a social system, the functioning patterns of both the micro and mega systems are the same. If members of the family (micro-system) face a problem, it will eventually affect their interactions with society (mega-system). The community's interventions during the crisis were extremely beneficial. Emotional support from relatives, friends, and neighbours is included. Participation in community-based activities by both parent and child is important in reducing the aftereffects of parental conflicts (Cummings, & Davies, 2002). According to Vygotsky's social learning theory, interaction with grandparents, close friends, teachers, and other family members can help children avoid behavioural problems. So, such acts could successfully manage emotional disturbances brought on by inter-parental discord. Constructive interactions with the community accelerate effective conflict resolution and establish realistic expectations (Berk, 2007; Harold & Sellers, 2018). During childhood, children's attachment styles toward their parents or care-takers are influenced by their relationships with others. Again, these attachment styles vary by culture. This, in turn, can lead to differences in conflict resolution (Taylor, et.al. 2015).

Destructive behavioural outcomes of parental conflict typically involve persuading the child to turn against the other parent. This may leave the child unsure of whom to believe or which parents to support (Cummings & Davies, 2002). "Positive interactions with the child are part of constructive conflict behaviour patterns. This will assist the child in developing emotional stability and initiating prosocial behaviour (Barthassat, 2014)". More research is needed to uncover more themes and constructs regarding socio-cultural influences on the interaction of children with inter-parental conflict.

### **4. The Significance of the Parental Approach as a Potential Mediator and its Necessity:**

To avoid consequences of perceived parental discord; parents must be resolved using constructive approaches (Barthassat, 2014). The total influence of conflict on children is determined by the length and severity of inter-parental conflict (Cummings & Davies, 2002). When parents demanded it, they could sometimes seize complete control of the situation. Several factors may have contributed to their situation. In that case, how parents deal with conflict is critical. It could be negative or positive. Of course, this is not an easy task for them. Their individual personalities and behavioural patterns interact in their conflict resolution. Even if they are contemplating divorce, they can protect their children from developing emotional insecurities and maladaptive conflict behaviours (Davies; Harold & Sellers 2018).

Many recent studies have discovered differences in parenting behaviours and behavioural outcomes among ethnic groups (Zagefka et al., 2020). Aside from that, researchers discovered similarities in children's reactions to parental conflict across cultures and ethnic groups. These facets can be found in a variety of films, plays, and literary genres, as they all represent cultural manifestations. Aside from that, literary works and mass media can set social norms and influence behaviour (Mulawka, 2013; Christensen, 2014). The majority of popular romantic comedies portray parental disagreements as the source of young adults' reluctance to enter into romantic relationships. Previous research suggested that parenting quality could be determined by children's behavioural outcomes and vice versa (Simons et al., 2014). Parenting practices that are effective and help reduce children's aggression and depression (Cowan & Cowan, 2002) "Children's adjustment problems are generally

## Reciprocities of Children's Perception of Parental Discord, Family Interaction and the Role of Parental Approaches: Through a Socio-Cultural Lens

influenced by their parents' willingness to adapt to the situation caused by marital discord". As a result, their behavioural approaches have an impact on children's externalizing behaviours such as social adjustments and social problem-solving aspects (Cummings & Davies; Harold & Sellers 2018).

Another important parental approach is seen in terms of promoting autonomy in children. Children leaving their parental home when they cross a certain age in order to achieve individuality is bound to happen, but certain cultures follow a joint family system even individuality is bound to happen, but certain cultures follow a joint family system. Grandparents, great-grandchildren, and everyone else live under the same roof, even after marriage. As a result, despite the fact that emotional liabilities are shared in both of these types of families, parental intermediation differs in both of these cultures, at least in terms of contextual factors. Taking all of the evidence into account, the current article advocates for more research in this area to provide more information on the process involving the parental approach to discord across different cultures (Cummings & Davies, 2018).

### CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the process-oriented approach, there are numerous paths through which socio-cultural factors and inter-parental conflicts interact (Cummings & Davies, 2002). The complexities of its variants cannot be captured in a single study. So, through this article, an attempt is made to gain insight regarding the possible interplay of parental discord and family interaction with socio-cultural factors. Many studies have previously reported the cultural influence on parents and marital conflicts. But in totality, little is known about the process of cultural influence on the perception of parental discord. This review article focused on incorporating several factors from previous studies and provided an overview of socio-cultural influences on inter-parental conflict and social interaction. The right frame of mind when approaching discord lessens several negative behavioural outcomes in children. There are no mandated rules or regulations that govern social processes; rather, they evolve on a regular basis. It is advantageous to have a global perspective on cross-cultural establishments (Cummings & Davies, 2002; Berk, 2007). Changes in familial-social dynamics and core values are also possible. This kind of an investigation about sociocultural interactions and parental discord is therefore necessary. This article is based on reviews of literature from various studies and books and is not empirical, but it does shed light on future discussions and investigations. Therefore, it would be appropriate to conduct correlational, experimental, and qualitative studies involving the two variables in a wider context for subsequent research for the identification of more and more hidden themes.

As a conclusion, it is pertinent to note that more socio-ecological and cross-cultural research should be initiated and included so that policymakers can better comprehend the precise mindset of beneficiaries when developing coping mechanisms and leading counselling sessions. While conducting family conflict research, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommended the promotion of positive cultural approaches to increase their utility of such investigations (Bernet, 2016). These references and additional research in this area will impact change and assist in understanding diverse culturally proactive practices that minimize the consequences of children's perceptions of discord between parents.

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## Reciprocities of Children's Perception of Parental Discord, Family Interaction and the Role of Parental Approaches: Through a Socio-Cultural Lens

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