Parental Conflicts and Child Socialization: An Impact Analysis of Parent Stress in Southern Punjab, Pakistan

Muhammad Javed Amjad[1], Abid Hussain Nawaz[2], & Muhammad Zubair[3]

Abstract

This work examines the effects of parental conflict on child socialization while also emphasizing that parental stress plays a moderating role in Southern Punjab, of Pakistan. The study uses literature to argue the following: they establish that there are negative effects on child emotional and social development arising from parental conflicts. In the present study, quantifiable data were gathered employing the structured questionnaire, thus collecting data from parents with children in the age group of 5-15 years. Quantitative analysis of the study results revealed that parental conflict exerts a strong direct effect on child socialization, and a mediated indirect effect through higher levels of parental stress. The findings of the present study indicate that while parental conflict has a small direct impact, stress is an essential mediator of this relationship, underlining the critical importance of addressing the parental stress. The research establishes that the aim of strategies like conflict solving and stress handling are important in coming up with healthier family bond since they enhance children's social and emotional development. The findings provide information regarding the nature of social interaction within the family and perhaps one of the most important aspects of parental attachment during stressful circumstances.

Keywords: Parental Conflicts, Child Socialization, Parent Stress

Introduction

Marital relationships are regarded as one of the most significant roles in the framework of the family institution, which affects children and parents' well-being and functioning. Nevertheless, when parents develop conflicts, the consequences are incredibly related to the welfare and growth of children. Recent studies conducted by Khalil (2024) on the effects of these conflicts explain that the effects of marital conflicts on children are far reaching in terms of their cognitive, emotional and social development with particular emphasis being placed on children's socialization the most affected aspect due to the knowledge gained from. Socialization is the process by which children learn to communicate and hence be part of society and gain their social roles and personae. A child's good social development has a positive impact on learning achievements, peer, and even future psychological well-being (Kamran, 2023).

The southern Punjab is a culturally different part of Pakistan where different social relations and family systems exist so is critical zone to examine the impact of marital conflicts. The participants' accounts of family norms, expectations, and financial situation are dissimilar to that of urban areas, and this might affect how conflict between parents affects child's enculturation in this setting. Potentially, the general form of conflict and child development does not differ across regions, however, the studies of this region show how regional factors shape these processes (Hussain, 2020).

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[1] Ph.D Scholar at Kohat University of Science and Technology, Kohat, Pakistan. Email: javedtalokar@gmail.com

[2] Post Doctorate Fellowship Member Multimedia University Malaysia. Email: abidhussainabid35@gmail.com

[3] Department of Social Work, Government Graduate College, Bhakkar. Email: zubairarain038@gmail.com

This means that disputes between parents can take many different manifestations including quarrels or other expressed toxic behaviors. When such conflicts are not resolved in a healthy manner they produce a hostile climate, thus becoming unfavourable to children's growth and development (Rizwan, 2020). High conflict parents have impaired children; in the area of social interactions, peer relations as well as behavioral problems. Children experiencing conflicts at home may develop the sort of conflicts in them, which could result in these issues; depression, low self-esteem and social maladjustment. Continuation of parental conflict also means that child's learning of social norms might go wrong, causing him/her to become antisocial or recluse (Stewart, 2000).

Another moderating variable which links parental conflict with child socialization is parental stress. The psychological pressure parents who are in various conflicts may bring home to their children especially when they are compromised (Ashraf, 2019). Stress degrades the quality of parenting through mere detachment or elevation of the degree and harshness of authoritarian strictness. Marital conflict impacts the ability of parents experiencing stress to meet the normal socialization developmental needs of a child, meaning the negative effect of marital conflict on the socialization of the child worsens (Ramzan, 2021). Given that traditional roles within Southern Punjab families, also dictate that the mother is a homemaker, and the father the breadwinner in the family. In Southern Punjab where such roles are further defined by social and monetary forms of oppression, the relative effect of parents stress on child socialization may further be heightened.

Stress in fact does affect how parents cope with everyday tasks including the ways they bring up their children. When a parent loses their temper, they may be aggressive in their actions causing elevations on conflict within the family circle forming cyclic society (Hossain, 2020). The child, therefore, due to such circumstance at home, may trigger behaviors that draws the attention of other members in the environment, or the child may withdraw from other activities to reduce contacts with other children due to the emotional stress at home. In this way stress proves to be a mediator stress which enhances the impact of parental conflict, at the same time offering a better understanding of how children cope with and respond to family conflict as analyzed by Sattar (2023).

Objectives of the Study

The study also seeks to analyze the impact of parenting conflict on child socialization in the South Punjab region with the moderation of stress among parents.

- To compare the direct effect of parental conflict on the socialization of children in Southern Punjab and elsewhere.
- To establish how parental stress mediates the effects of parental conflict on child socialization.
- To explore cultural and social aspects of Southern Punjab to understand how parental conflict as well as stress interferes with child socialization.
- To suggest strategies for mitigating the negative effects of parental conflict through stress management and improved parenting practices.

Research Questions of the Study

RQ-1: What is the direct impact of conflict between parents on child socialization in Southern Punjab?

RQ-2: In what way can stress parental act as a moderator of the impact of parental conflict on child socialization?

RQ-3: Why do socio cultural factors prevalent in the Southern Punjab region either enhance or diminish the effects of parents' conflict on child socialization?

RQ-4: What strategies can be proposed to minimize the negative effects of parental conflict on child socialization, considering the mediating role of parental stress?

Research Hypotheses of the Study

RH1: Inter parental conflict has massive detrimental impact on child socialization in southern Punjab.

RH2: Parental stress plays significant role and moderates the link ownership between parental conflict and child socialization.

RH3: Socio-cultural factors of parental conflict moderate the effects in child socialization either enhance or diminish its influence.

RH4: Reducing parental stress could increase the rate of child socialization irrespective of the level of parental conflict.

Literature Review

Marital conflicts are especially interchange involving anger or physical aggression between parents, and its impact to kids is intense. Several empirical studies demonstrate that children with high levels of parental conflict are emotionally, cognitively, behaviorally, and socially impaired as they socially develop, and a large portion of this population is anticipated to reach this age by 2024. Socialization on how children are expected to behave and what knowledge and attitudes they require in order to effectively operate in society is highly vulnerable to interference in the family context (Kauser, 2017).

Riaz, (2022) explained that parental conflict distorts self-organization because it causes an unpredictable and stressful environment to children. According to Ramzan (2023), children who grow under such conditions may be denied effective socio competence skills when exposed to hostile environments repeatedly. Thus, intensity, frequency and type of conflict all matter as to the degree of conflict experienced. Problems such as emotion dysregulation for aggression, withdrawal, poor Peer Relationship, and negative parent- child relationship are common for children in families that have constant and unresolved conflict (Ashraf, 2020).

Parental Stress as a Mediating Variable

Stress in parenthood is seen as mediating the effect of marital conflict to child outcomes especially socialization. Shafiq (2016) established that parent's who are in continued conflict are prone to have higher stress levels which may limit their functioning in parenting role. This alters their mental and emotional health and in turn impacts the warmth brought in the parent-child bonds with more awful authoritative conduct or absence of warmth similar to enthusiastic prevarication (Anjum, 2017).

The study conducted by Shariff (2006) showed that, parents under stress are more likely to act out their stress on children through neglect, use of force or withdrawal of attention. Such children hence get used to these negative interrelations and thus their young socialization ability gets strained (Suneel, 2021). This review explores that, as well as showing that parental stress does not only moderate, but also intensifies, the effects of the conflict. This means that the more stress parents undergo as a result of unresolved conflict, the worse the socialization of children will look like, and this encompasses poor peer relationships, failure in comprehending social norms, and high sensitivity (Mamdani, 2015).

Impact of Parental Conflict on Child Socialization

A literature review conducted by (Iqbal, 2014) showing the direct impacts of Parental conflict on child socialization calls for family cooperation for proper child social wellbeing. Available research indicates that inter parent conflict has an inverse relation with the child's capacity for friendly affiliation for instance, the child may exhibit poor language skills or be a social recluse or a behavior troublemaker. This impact is observed at every developmental period, and therefore, it may be stated that parental conflict has negative lifelong impacts on a child's social skills (Nnadede, 2013).

Aftab (2022) found that there is one major impact of parental conflict, and these are: Insecure attachment between the child and parents. Oftentimes kids end up feeling neglected, confused and emotionally insecure – torn between two conflicting parents. This emotional instability can affects a child's way of interacting with other children in peers age group due to issues of trust, anxiety or aggression (Mallinck, 2019). The study demonstrates that learning experiences involving hostile and unresolved conflicts have an effect of creating other negative attitudes that decrease the social competence of children.

Parental Stress and Parenting Quality

In the study, Sharif (2009) showed that parental stress influenced parenting behaviour and, therefore, child outcome. Intense stress linked to unresolved marital conflict often results in parents acting inheritably to discipline, aggressively or neglectfully. Pressure tends to rob parents of their energy, positive attitude and ability to attend and cater for the needs of their children. In such situations children are deprived of the opportunity to learn emotional intelligence and social skills that would enable them cope with relationship outside the comfort of the family (Khalil, 2024).

Another area of study accredits parenting quality to suffer under stress and a direct impact on child socialization. It turns out that children with stressed parents are emotionally deprived, either in terms of getting appropriate punishment, not receiving any positive attention at all or inconsistent punishment, which is critical to proper socialization. These children are even more socially developed to be able to interact, make friends, or even to sort out their differences making their social development a big issue (Grusec, 2019; Grusec, 2002; McLoyd, 2000).

Southern Punjab

An added layer of culture that is unique to the socio- culture context of southern punjab adds an angle to understand the relationship between parental conflict or stress and child's socialisation. This region also confirms traditional gender and family child care responsibilities and expectations make high pressure on parents; especially mothers (Bhuttah, 2019). 495 Women who are married and have no social or economic freedom may experience stress magnified by these cultural values during marital conflict. The relevant literature indicates that, in such settings, parental stress may be higher, and therefore, caregiving can become even more challenging in terms of implementation of positive, supportive child-care practices (Kamran, 2023).

Pakistani culture in Southern Punjab has strict norms of family and community so parents' approaches to conflict and stress may be contaminated by those cultures. Social embarrassment of marital conflict sometimes keeps parents from seeking assistance and families may stay for years in conflict-stressed marriages. Hence, socialization can become a significant problem for such families and, therefore, their children – they have repeatedly painted the picture of conflict, but the socio-cultural factors that contribute to it have not been elaborated, but they make conflict even worse (Ashraf, 2019).

Empirical Relationship between Parental Conflict, Stress, and Child Socialization

Numerous studies confirm the existence of a medium to strongly positive correlation between parental conflict and stress levels and child socialization. Cross-sectional research indicate that children who grow up in homes where parents have high levels of conflict display more negative outcomes such as; poor peer relations, low academic achievement or poor management of their emotions than children from healthy families. Such problems remain unresolved in adolescents and adults, thus suggesting the simplicity's severity and wide impact of parental discord (Ashraf, 2019).

Several authors has investigated the moderating role of parental Stress in empirical researches (Zaman, 2013; Firdous, 2019) reveal that stress is the common pathway of conflict emanating from marital discord to , affect children. For example, a branch of the body of literature points out that parenting conflict results in high stress levels which decrease parenting quality thus negative impacts on children's social development. Earlier works have noted that stress moderates the link between conflict and child socialization by undermining parent's capacity to be emotionally present and sensitive this is important for socialization (Ashraf, 2019).
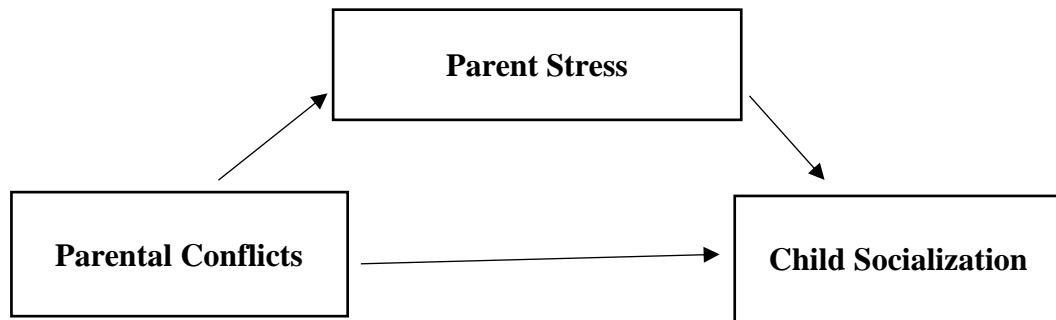
Based on literature, coupled with the dearth of empirical research from Southern Punjab, it is postulated that cultural factors may actually exacerbate the impact of parental conflict and stress. Past and current cultural norms and practices, including gender roles, economic constraints, and strong community expectations may put more pressure on parents with low SE, than on parents with a high SE. As a result, effects on child socialization observed in this area can be even graver because increased parental stress levels are unlikely to be easily reduced due to cultural and structural frameworks.

Supported Theory: Family Systems Theory

This theory which was postulated by Murray Bowen then sees the family as having emotional roles in which the behavior of, for example, a parent affects the behavior of the rest of the family. Family Systems Theory suggests that family is also a system of relationships, and the interactions of their parents can affect children's emotional and social growth profoundly (Bokharey, 2021). Spousal conflicts destabilize the otherwise balanced emotional family equation and creates stress and often emotional dysfunction which trickle down the children. The theory proposes that stress as explicated by parents in parenting behaviors that are consequent to one or another conflict undermines socialization of kids (Nawaz, 2021).

Applying the Family Systems Theory in the context of analyzing the role of culture in shaping the PDF and systems of Socialization in a Southern Punjab province of Pakistan, this study helps understand how stresses in the parent –child relationships of a traditional and conservative society interrelate within a given social environment. Specifically, when parents are stressed because of conflicts, everyone in the family mainly children feels the impact of the pressure (Kerig, 2019). This emotional workload can distort healthy parent-child relations and therefore negatively impacts a child's learning of effective person-to-person social relations, peer interaction and direction on regards to suitable social policies. The theory pays much attention towards the family systems, and not every member, thus making it useful for accounting the interaction between the adults and specifically parents, where conflicts may be common with children (Ashraf, 2019).

Development of the Model

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          │    Parent Stress    │
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│ Parental Conflicts│──────→│  Child Socialization │
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Research Methodology

This research is anchored on the positivist research paradigm, which assumes that social realities are measurable and can therefore be quantitatively researched. The type of approach that features the research is deductive because it enables formulation of hypotheses from theories of parental conflict, stress, and child socialization. In this context, the present study adopts a quantitative research design aimed at investigating those relationships and examining the moderation effect of parental stress. This makes the adopted instruments structured questionnaire and improves the reliability and reliability of assessment of parental conflict, parental stress, and child socialization by comparing them with similar prior tested research findings.

The sample comprises of 200 to 300 parents from Southern Punjab, which are selected from random sampling technique in order to encompass large stratified population on basis of their socio economic status. The questionnaire is administered to parents with children of age between 5 and 15 years of age. The quantitative data collected will be analyzed using statistical techniques such as regression analysis, correlation analysis and mediation analysis to provide a sound method of determining the direct and mediate effects of the variables on each other. Through the usage of these quantitative procedures, this research seeks to develop generality of generalizing other findings with reference to tensions manifesting in parental conflicts and stress toward socialization of children in Southern Punjab.

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
PC -> CS	0.089	0.089	0.034	2.670	**0.008**
PC -> PS	0.128	0.127	0.041	3.137	**0.002**
PS -> CS	0.469	0.464	0.039	12.131	**0.000**

Results and Interpretation
Total Effects
Table 1: Total Effects

The table 1 presents the relationship between Parental Conflict (PC), Parental Stress (PS), and Child Socialization (CS). The path PC → CS was positive with Fleet effect, 0.089 (t = 2.670, p = 0.008) suggesting that parental conflict has moderate, significant direct effect on child socialization. Alike, results for the association between PC and PS were also confirmed; with PC → PS yielding a correlation coefficient of 0.128 and a T-test of 3.137 and a p value of 0.002 confirms the increase in parental

stress due to the conflict. Last of all, there is a positive influence which depicts 0.469, its corresponding T-statistic is 12.131 and p-value is 0.000 for the PS → CS path, therefore, stress is significant to show the conflict's effect on child socialization.

Mediation Effect

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
PC -> PS -> CS	0.060	0.059	0.020	2.955	**0.003**

Table 2: Mediating Effects

The table shows moderation model of *Parental Stress (PS)* between *Parental Conflict (PC)* and *Child Socialization (CS)*. Based on Table 6, the path estimate of *PC → PS → CS* is positively affected with *0.060, T-statistic* being *2.955* and a significant *p-value < 0.003*. This in effect suggests that parental stress largely accounts for the effects of parental conflict on child socialization. That is, parental conflict moderates child socialization through its effect on parental stress pointing to the importance of stress as the mediator within this relation.
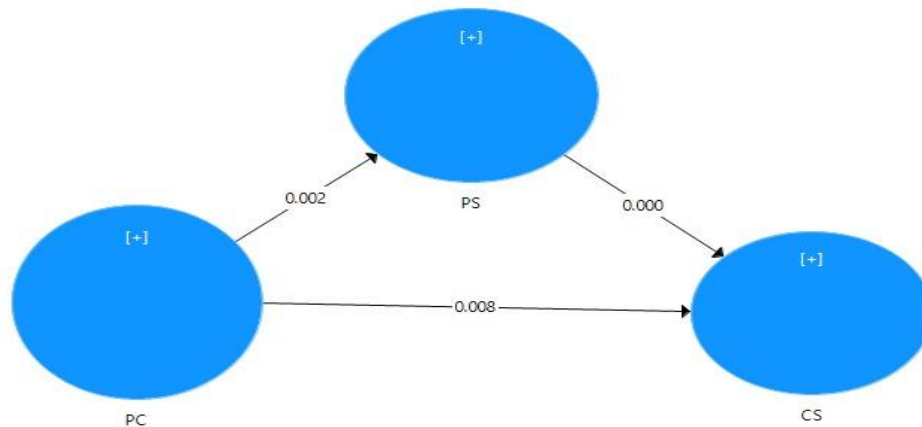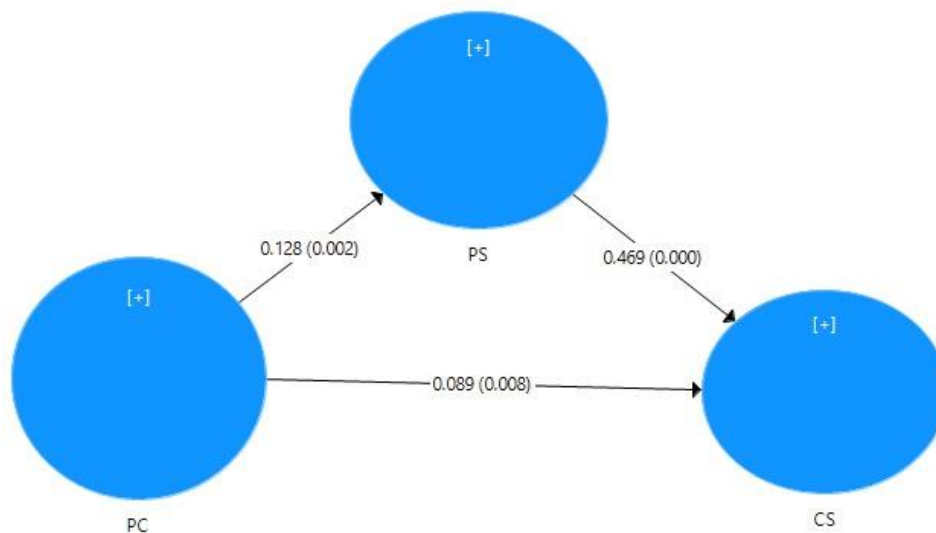
Figure 1: Significance Value

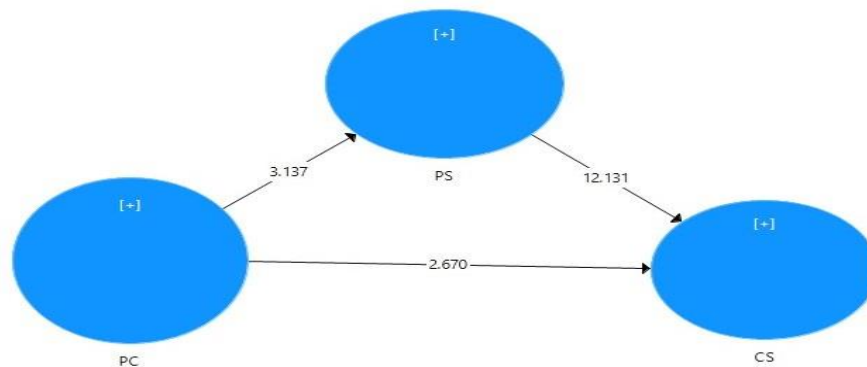*Figure 2:* Path Coefficient Values

Figure 3: T-values

Discussion

This is a very useful study for better understanding of parental conflict effects on child socialization with the focus done on the role of parental stress. The results presented here reveal that there is moderate but positive and statistically significant direct relationship between parental conflict and child socialization. Kids who grow up with divorced or separated parents have social learning challenges; these include: problems in managing emotions, problems related to peer relationships, and problems related to the general adjustment. This goes further to corroborate the fact that an unstable, conflict ridden home environment hinders a child from learning fundamental interpersonal skills. However, although it has direct bearing on this argument, what it points to is that conflict, however significant, may not be the only reason for child socialization, there are other factors at play.

The results also suggest that there is high level of significance between the level of conflict between parents and parental stress. When parents are characterized by high levels of interparental conflict, the level of stress that accumulates through the emotions weakens the capacity for parenting. This stress affects their emotional availability and discipline consistency and in turn the child's social development. More importantly, the study establishes parental stress as a mediator between conflict and socialization, showing that most of the adversative effects of conflict on children are through the stress that parents undergo.

These results suggest that reduction of stress among parents is relevant to raise the child socialization prospects in the families with conflict. If one is to think about this issue, stress could be medicated or decreased and this might make parents better placed in offering the necessary directions when it comes to training their children on proper ethical standards within the society. The wider effects of parental conflict on children may be potentially reduced by interventions carried out in areas such as conflict resolution and stress management within the family, in areas such as Southern Punjab, socio-cultural considerations may enhance the impact of familial stress.

Conclusion

This research investigates the parental conflict, parental stress, and child socialization in Southern Punjab. The results show that there is a direct relationship between parental conflict and child socialization, though the relationship is heavily moderated by stress. Ongoing conflicts cause high levels of parental stress that interfere with parenting and have adverse effects on children's social competence. Consequently, it becomes clear that in order to make a positive change for the children, parental stress must be targeted. Therefore, family interventions that involve teaching and promoting

conflict reconciliation and stress control are key steps to the improvement of healthy relations in any family. That is why support parents in stress management and conflict resolution will improve the emotional and social competence of the child and improve the social condition in families dealing with these issues. The study calls for an increased attention to family support models that will offer children protection from the negative direct effects of parental conflict.

Recommendations

Currently, this paper has presented a variety of solutions concerning experiences and types of parental conflict and its effects on child socialization. First, parenting programs launched for members of a community should harness opportunities for strengthening parental competencies for handling of conflicts as well as interested parents' stress management so that proper practices are used by parents for resolving of conflicts. Therefore, availability of counseling services for parents always stressed will help low stress parents to handle their emotions so as to strengthen the family. Sharing duties with parents through scheduled workshops on emotional intelligence can also help parents develop essential competencies for managing their own and their children's angry feelings independently, and can also help patients learn how to resolve conflicts peacefully. On a macro level, more attention should be paid towards specific schemes regarding family support in case of conflicting and stressed parents, which might be addressed by referrals for organizations as well as required therapeutic assistance for high stake families financially supported by governments. Finally, extending the study to explore the changes in patterns of parental conflict with reference to different socio-cultural settings will enhance understanding of the effects of conflict on families in the long-run to promote the right interventions.

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