



Effect of relationship stress between parents on children's behavior

Mehak Rawat, Dr. Smita Tiwary Ojha
Student, Assistant Professor-III
Amity University, Noida Uttar Pradesh

Abstract

The current study examines the effect of parental relationship stress on children's emotional and behavioral development in the Indian socio-cultural context. Using a sample of 120 parents of 4- to 18-year-old children, the study used a correlational research design with standardized psychometric measures—the Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI-16) and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). Findings were characterized by a strong negative relationship between children's behavioral problems and parents' relationship satisfaction ($r = -0.558$, $p < .01$), implying that greater stress in the parental relationship is correlated with more emotional and behavioral issues in children. Regression analysis also established that the variance in parent satisfaction was fully explained by 31.1% of the child behavioral problems. Internalizing symptoms like withdrawal and anxiety, and externalizing behaviors of aggression and hyperactivity, were significantly common in children exposed to increased relational tension between parents. The results confirm the bidirectionality of influence between family and emphasize the urgency of culturally applicable therapeutic interventions with respect to parents' relational wellbeing and children's mental health. The current research adds to an increasing library of research focusing on family psychology in non-Western cultures and highlights the relevance of early recognition and systemic support for families to prevent developmental problems in children.

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

One of the most prevalent and troubling issues individuals face is marital distress. All married people encounter struggles. For some of these people, the struggles become so disappointing that they begin to contemplate divorce (Gottman & Silver, 1999). This is especially true when an extramarital affair takes place. Even seemingly successful marriages can experience distress when something as catastrophic as an affair occurs (Glass & Wright, 1992). The impact of marital distress is very severe on the partners and tends to cause severe sadness, chronic worry, tension, anxiety, and even depression (Beach et al., 2003). When it comes to families the impact is equally staggering, particularly when the level of conflict is high. Adolescents who are brought up in high conflict families are prone to more emotional problems (Cummings & Davies, 2002).

Types of relationship stress

Relationship stress can be rooted in various forms, such as financial stress, conflicts, misunderstanding,

dissatisfaction, lack of communication, lack of trust, infidelity etc. All these reasons could take a major toll on the relationship of a couple, and cause problems for them resulting in frequent fights. Some of the various stressors could be

1.1.1. Marital or interpersonal conflict

Marital conflict is best referred to as frequent unresolved disagreements or hostile exchanges between a couple. Cummings and Davies (2002) noted that exposure to interparental conflict can undermine children's emotional security and increase risks for problem behaviors, including aggression, oppositional defiant behavior, and anxiety.

1.1.2. Relationship dissatisfaction

Relationship dissatisfaction occurs when one partner or both feel unsatisfied, disengaged or unhappy within the relationship. As an example, dissatisfaction may arise from emotional neglect, lack of gratitude, sexual dissatisfaction among others. It has emerged as a prominent precursor to separation and divorce and, as Whisman (2007) states, often reduces emotional availability to children.

1.1.3. Emotional withdrawal and divorce

Emotional withdrawal, which describes one or both partners detaching from one another, is one of the most damaging forms of disengagement. Children whose parents emotionally withdraw and separate have a greater risk of developing internalizing symptoms, externalizing behaviors such as defiance or hyperactivity, and other adjustments difficulties (Amato, 2000).

1.1.4. Financial Alongside Role-Related Stress

A parent's relationship can also be strained due to external stressors like the financial burden of living or demanding life roles. Stress from the economy, family-work dynamics, or balance impacts relationships and gets more difficult with parents in economic distress, facing job insecurities, or having to juggle work and family responsibilities (Conger et al 2002).

In the past few decades, there has been an increase in marking the following parental discord in modern family systems period. This change marks the development of family diversity in ideology, gender roles, economic and socio-political pressures on marriage, parenting and expectations. Family types now are more advanced and include dual-income, single parents, cohabiting whereas unmarried, blended families and many more. These changes, coupled with increased diversity in family structures, while like flexibility have also increased the amount of stress in intimate relationships (Cherlin 2010). With parents working full time to meet economic demands, the little time available becomes insufficient for meaningful interactions, resulting in emotional distance, strain and fall in relationship satisfaction (Nomaguchi & Milkie 2020).

Impact of family dynamics on children's development

Children's development is positively influenced when parents are in a warm, respectful relationship, because children begin to feel emotionally safe, which supports their development on an emotional level. Additionally, children acquire effective conflict resolution and communication skills by watching their parents interact.

Children who experience daily conflict, abusive behavior and extreme hostility from the parents are likely to grow up in an unsafe, unstable and extremely stressful environment. Frequent exposure to conflict, violence, emotional neglect or any form of domestic abuse may instill deep rooted anxiety, fear and attachment problems in children.

1.2 Stress of parental relationship

The level of satisfaction within the relationship gauges how content one is with their partner or the partnership. Psychologists measure this through self-report questionnaires capturing the emotional, cognitive and behavioral

components of the relationship, which depicts the overall value of the partnership and its constituents, as well as the progression over time.

One of the most frequently used measures is the Couples Satisfaction Index with 16 items (CSI-16) created by Funk and Rogge in 2007. It is a shorter form of the full CSI, which aims to measure relationship satisfaction accurately and reliably. The CSI-16 contains open-ended questions such as: "How satisfied are you with your relationship?") and indirect ones using semantic differential scales (e.g., "interesting–boring").

1.3 Children's Behavioral Development

Children's behavior development encompasses emotional, psychological, and social development, spurred by environmental and genetic influences, most notably family relationships.

- Behavioral problems are usually grouped into:
 - Internalizing problems – inward behaviors such as anxiety, depression, withdrawal, and low self-esteem.
 - Externalizing problems are characterized by overt behaviors, including aggression, defiance, hyperactivity, and conduct-related issues.
- Major development drivers are:
 - Emotional regulation – managing and expressing emotions appropriately.
 - Social skills and peer relationships – developing cooperation, empathy, and friendships.
 - Conduct behavior – respecting rules, being polite, and not off-task.

Early experiences, especially those in the home, have a profound impact on personality and emotional development. Children exposed to a warm environment will most likely develop adaptive coping mechanisms, whereas children exposed to parental stressors will most likely have behavioral and emotional difficulties.

1.4 Rationale for the Study

The increasing complexity of family forms and interpersonal relationships in contemporary society has introduced the problem of parental relationship stress into the arena of psychological study. Urbanization, gender role revolution, economic uncertainty, and dual-income stress have significantly increased parental stress. In the evolving social context, it is important to understand the impact of this stress on the emotional and behavioral development of children and therefore such a study is warranted and timely. Children learn their fundamental emotional and cognitive foundations in the family environment, and parental relationship dysfunctions can compromise their psychological resilience and social adaptability.

Despite the large body of literature on global family stress, there remains a broad gap in specific studies that examine critically the specific impact of parental relationship dissatisfaction on children's emotional, social, and behavioral adjustment. Much of the earlier work has been on very extreme situations, like divorce or domestic violence, without examining the more subtle but equally harmful impact of chronic discontent, poor communication, or lingering conflict between parents. Additionally, a significant percentage of earlier work is from Western settings, which might not be representative of the distinctive cultural, family, and societal features embedded in non-Western settings, particularly in India. Indian socio-cultural fabric is dominated by close family bonds, collectivism, and societal values of marital stability. Yet, changing family patterns, greater exposure to global influences, and enhanced awareness of mental health are eroding traditional dynamics. Stigma surrounding marital concerns often results in underreporting or repression of relational concerns, with children bearing the brunt in silence. Therefore, research that situates parental stress in the Indian context is essential for creating culturally relevant assessment measures, therapy, and policy guidelines.

In addition, early detection and active intervention with families under relational tension can dramatically mitigate its negative impact on children. Identifying the particular mechanisms through which parental relationship processes affect children's behavior and mental health, mental health practitioners, teachers, and caregivers can create specific interventions to support at-risk children. This study, employing standardized tools such as the Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI-16) and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), tries to bridge an important empirical lacuna while offering actionable feedback that can be used both in clinical and school environments.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

1.5.1. The current research attempts to investigate the role of stress among parents' relationship on children's emotional and behavioral development in the Indian socio-cultural context. The particular research objectives of this study are as follows:

1.5.2. To measure parents' level of relationship stress based on the Couple Satisfaction Index-16 (CSI-16), a standardized instrument that assesses satisfaction and relationship stress in intimate relationships.

1.5.3. The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is also used to measure the emotional and behavioral functioning of children through the assessment of several domains, including emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity, peer relationship problems, and prosocial behavior.

1.5.4. To investigate the connection between stress in the parental relationship and child behavioral outcomes, i.e., in emotional, social, and conduct presentations. This encompasses the examination of internalizing (e.g., withdrawal, anxiety) and externalizing (e.g., defiance, aggression) behavioral patterns.

1.5.5. The purpose is to test the moderating effect of socio-demographic characteristics, such as family structure, parents' level of education, employment status, and economic welfare, on parental stress and the child's conduct.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The limits of the present study are defined well to yield focused and measurable findings regarding the effect of stress in parent-child relationship on children's behavioral development. The present study incorporates the following factors:

- **Age Group of Children:** The study considers children in the age group of 4 to 18 years, thus enabling differences in development during early childhood, middle childhood, and adolescence to be examined. For Conducting in-depth analysis of manifestation of parental stress through children's behavior at various levels of psychological development, the chosen age group is adequate.
- **Highlight Emotional and Behavioral Outcomes:** The study in particular analyzes both the internalizing behaviors (like withdrawal in emotions and anxiety) and the externalizing behaviors (aggression and conduct problems). It highlights the possible impact of tension in parent-child relationships on children's social functioning, peer relationships, and emotional control.
- **Measurement Based on Standard:** The study utilizes a quantitative research approach through reliance on standardized psychometric measures that include the use of the Couple Satisfaction Index-16 (CSI-16) to measure parent relationship satisfaction as well as the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) to measure self-reported dimensions in children's behaviour.

Inclusion of Socio-Demographic Variables: In order to take into account contextual and environmental factors, the study incorporates necessary socio-demographic data on the parents, including their name, age, gender, occupation, and education level. This allows for a proper understanding of how different socio-economic and cultural contexts might potentially affect the impact of relationship stress on children.

1.7 Need and Significance of the Study

An understanding of the consequences of stress for parent relationships on children's behavioral patterns is of great importance within the field of clinical psychology, specifically within the field of child psychology assessment and family therapy. Children who are repeatedly exposed to intense parent conflict are at an increased risk for a broad range of emotional and behavioral disorders. The purpose of this research is to address an important gap in the field of applied psychology studies by providing empirical data on the manner in which parents' relational patterns directly affect the development of children.

The findings of this research have important implications for pediatricians, teachers, and counselors. Behavior disturbance observed in the clinic or school setting are often linked with family stressors. With knowledge of the indicators of parental conflict, these clinicians can promote early referral and offer beneficial interventions to aid both parents and children. From an intervention and preventive perspective, results can be applied to guide the design and implementation of parenting interventions and models of relationship counseling that address the negative impacts of family stress on children. With a greater understanding of these processes, intervention models that facilitate effective co-parenting, emotion regulation, and effective communication can be developed.

In addition, the study adds to the academic literature of family psychology by using validated measures and a systematic methodology in an Indian socio-cultural context—a setting often neglected in psychological research. This innovation not only adds to the existing body of knowledge but also to the practical utility of psychological services tailored to culturally unique family forms.

1.8 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter laid the ground for the present study by reviewing the context and theoretical framework of parental relationship stress and its impact on children's emotional, social, and behavioral development. The chapter offered the varied forms of stressors that occur in parental relationships, reviewed relevant theoretical models, and proposed the need for empirical studies in the present socio-cultural context. The chapter also outlined the purposes, limits, and justification of the research, with the value of early identification and intervention emphasized. Such attitudes all pertain to the necessity of exploring the complex role of parental conflict and, thus, laid the ground for further research and applied research in child mental health and family well-being.

CHAPTER - 2 Review of Literature

Fosco G., et al, (2023) explored that there is a scarcity of long-term studies assessing threat appraisals as a mediating factor between interparental conflict (IPC) and internalizing issues, as well as a deficiency in longitudinal research examining the influence of the wider family context in these frameworks. Utilizing the cognitive-contextual framework, this research examined 225 adolescents and their families from age 11 through young adulthood (age 19.6) to assess the lasting effects of IPC and threat evaluations on internalizing symptoms in young adults. The family environment—characterized by strong cohesion and structure—affected the relationship between IPC and threat evaluations. Teenagers in families that faced reductions in a positive family atmosphere and rising IPC had the greatest threat assessments; conversely, families that sustained a positive family climate acted as a defense against rising IPC. This conclusion aligns with a family disengagement viewpoint, which might pose less risk to adolescents but could lead to other problematic results. This research highlights the significance of IPC and threat evaluations during adolescence and provides fresh perspectives on how family dynamics can safeguard against increasing IPC for young adults at risk of internalizing issues.

Craft A., et al, (2021) explored that marital issues have been associated with various indicators of maladjustment in children. While many factors of this relationship have been recognized, the mechanism through which exposure to interparental conflict leads to adjustment issues in children remains largely uninvestigated. The connection between marital conflict and child maladjustment is critically assessed, and a framework is provided that organizes current studies while proposing avenues for future research into processes that could explain this relationship. As per the framework, children's comprehension of marital conflict mediates its effects, influenced by contextual, cognitive, and developmental elements. The framework's implications for children's adaptation are examined.

Mak M. et al, (2020) studied that caring for young kids can be stressful occasionally, and this parenting stress might affect parenting approaches and child behavior issues, potentially resulting in challenges in the future. A total of 371 parents with children in preschool age (3 to 7 years old) were enlisted. The findings indicated that increased parenting stress correlated with greater reported issues in child behavior. Parenting stress was positively associated with negative parenting approaches, and negative parenting approaches partially mediated the link between parenting stress and child behavior issues. Results from this research indicated that decreasing parenting stress, enhancing parenting practices like parenting styles, and strengthening the parent-child bond through early assistance are crucial and beneficial for parents, children, and family dynamics overall.

Spinelli M. et al, (2020) conducted a research sought to investigate the impact of risk factors linked to the COVID-19 pandemic on the well-being of both parents and children. Findings indicated that the perception of quarantine's difficulty is a vital element that negatively affects the well-being of both parents and children. The influence of quarantine on children's emotional and behavioral issues is affected by individual and joint stress experienced by

parents, with the latter having a more pronounced effect. Parents who indicated greater challenges in coping with quarantine exhibit higher levels of stress. Consequently, this escalates the issues faced by the children. Residing in a higher-risk area, the quality of the home setting, or their connection to the pandemic's impacts, does not influence families' well-being.

Gao M., et al (2019) evaluated how marital conflict influences parenting behaviors for both mothers and fathers and to determine if these impacts vary between within-person and cross-person associations in parental pairs. A total of 235 families took part in the research over a span of 2 years. Fathers and mothers separately reported their use of constructive and destructive strategies during marital disputes, along with their parenting actions when children faced negative emotions. Findings showed relations both between individuals and within individuals. For instance, fathers' harmful disputes forecasted mothers' distress responses to children's negative feelings, backing a spillover theory. Mothers' harmful conflict behaviors were associated with reduced unsupportive maternal parenting, backing a compensatory hypothesis.

Madigan S., et al, (2017) discovered diverse patterns of marital conflict in early childhood, pinpoint predictors linked to these patterns, and analyze the relationships between trajectory group affiliation and children's behavioral disruptions. The study involved 469 families who were assessed 4 times while their children were between 2 and 54 months old. Maternal accounts of marital discord, negative childhood experiences, depressive symptoms, and sociodemographic traits were gathered, alongside averaged maternal and paternal reports of children's disruptive issues. Maternal negative childhood experiences were found to elevate the risk of being in the high-increasing group, while depressive symptoms were linked to a greater risk of being in the high-decreasing group. Significantly, children of mothers in the high-increasing category showed more disruptive behavior at 54 months relative to those of mothers in the high-decreasing and low-stable categories.

Mark, K. M., & Pike, A. (2017) examined the link between marital quality and child behavior, evaluating mother–child relationship quality as a possible mediator. The sample comprised 78 mothers with two children of interest (average ages = 9.82 and 12.05 years, respectively). Mothers provided insights into their children's behavior and the quality of their marriage, while each child shared their perspective on their relationship with their mother. Supporting our hypothesis, the quality of marriage was associated with children's behavior. Significantly, our results indicate varied outcomes for children in the same family, reinforcing a child-specific perspective. Additional proof that both the quality of marriage and the dynamics of shared and differing mother–child relationships are connected to child behavior is presented here. As a result, efforts aimed at minimizing children's behavioral issues and promoting positive behavior can effectively incorporate an emphasis on the quality of the parents' romantic relationship, in addition to parenting strategies.

Tavassolie, T. et al (2016) examined the connections among mothers' and fathers' perceived parenting approaches, marital discord, and children's behavioral results. Participants in the child group (N = 152) were between the ages of 3 and 9 years. Data from both parents regarding their perceived parenting approach, marital discord, and issues with child behavior were gathered. Results showed that (a) the parenting styles of mothers and fathers were interconnected, (b) the authoritarian and permissive tendencies of both parents were correlated with heightened child internalizing and externalizing behavioral issues, (c) marital disagreements had a significant connection to child behavior issues, (d) when there were discrepancies in reported parenting styles between mothers and fathers, higher levels of marital conflict were observed. Specifically, marital and child outcomes were worse when mothers considered themselves more authoritative than fathers and when fathers viewed themselves as more authoritarian than mothers, while outcomes improved when fathers perceived themselves as more permissive than mothers and when mothers were more authoritarian than fathers. The implications for couple and family therapy are examined.

Rafiq, N., & Rafiq, N. (2016) examined that a child keeps on learning from his surroundings for his entire life starting from birth. Above all, he discovers valuable lessons from his parents and the bond they share. Influenced by the culture around him, he experiences numerous physical, psychological, social, and emotional transformations during his lifetime. The literature review has been performed to determine and underscore the reasons for conflicts, their impacts on different phases of child development, and several suggestions to address the issue. Numerous studies demonstrate the detrimental effects of marital disputes throughout all stages of a child's growth, from

infancy to adulthood. Disputes in adolescence lead to feelings of isolation, engaging in risky behavior, and hostility in later relationships (Arshat, 2013). Similarly, in adulthood, it results in higher chances of divorce. A combination of various socio-cultural and economic factors, or sometimes just one of them, are accountable for this issue. Thus, a multi-faceted approach is needed to address the issue. Children, as the most at-risk group, need prompt actions to avert negative outcomes.

Liu, L., & Wang, M. (2015) investigated how parents' psychological aggression mediates the link between parenting stress and children's internalizing and externalizing problem behaviors one year later. In a study involving 311 intact Chinese families with preschoolers, the results indicated that mother's parenting stress directly influenced children's internalizing and externalizing behavioral problems, as well as indirectly through the mother's aggression psychologically. Nonetheless, neither direct nor indirect impacts of fathers' parenting stress on children's internalizing and externalizing behavioral issues were identified. The results emphasize the significance of concurrently examining the impacts of parenting on their children within a family systems context.

El-Sheikh, M (2015) investigated the long-term relationships between marital conflict among adults and the subsequent sleep duration and quality of children measured objectively using actigraphy. Additionally, they evaluated parasympathetic nervous system (PNS) activity indexed by respiratory sinus arrhythmia reactivity (RSA-R) and initial sleep as moderators of these predictive relationships. Sleep remained consistent in children who had more minutes of sleep and superior sleep quality at W1 or experienced low levels of marital conflict at W1. Demonstrating conditional risk, marital discord forecasted greater sleep issues at W2 for children who had inadequate sleep at W1 alongside less effective physiological regulation¹. Results enhance the limited literature and highlight the significance of jointly examining bioregulatory systems alongside family dynamics when predicting children's subsequent sleep characteristics.

Woodman A. et al, (2015) studied that parents of children with developmental disabilities (DD) face a heightened risk of psychological stress relative to other parents. Children's significant levels of internalizing and externalizing issues have been shown to add to this increased level of stress. Limited research has explored the opposite direction of effects, particularly in families with a child who has a developmental disability. The current research explored the transactional interactions between behavioral issues in children and maternal stress in a sample of 176 families with a child diagnosed with DD at an early age. The 15-year study period, covering early childhood (age 3) to adolescence (age 18), showed signs of both child-driven and parent-driven influences, aligning with transactional developmental models. Transactions between parents and children were observed to differ across various life stages and in relation to different types of behavioral issues.

Vaez E., et al, (2015) evaluated the empirical results from past research that examines the impact of marital relationships on the behavioral development of children by analyzing the literature that supports the connection between marital relations and children's behavioral issues. The results indicated that children from families with high conflict face a risk of developing psychopathological issues during their teenage years. This review contributes to an extensive body of literature that underscores the harmful impacts of marital discord on children. The research offers a solid foundation for additional studies on this subject, given the diversity in behavior issues among married couples and children.

Puff J. & Renk K. (2014) studied that during an economic downturn, understanding the connections between economic strain and parenting stress, the parenting practices of mothers and fathers, and behavioral issues in young children could offer valuable insights for interventions that effectively support families during their financial hardships. In this study, 124 parents from various cultural backgrounds with young children aged 2 to 6 assessed their economic, life, and parenting stress; their parenting practices; and the behavioral issues of their young children. Upon closer investigation, parenting stress entirely mediated the connection between parents' financial reductions and young children's internalizing issues, as well as the link between parents' adverse economic occurrences and young children's externalizing issues. These results indicated that it is essential to analyze these variables together.

Goldberg J. , & Carlson, M. J. (2014) stated that a substantial body of literature has demonstrated a connection between family structure and child well-being, yet there is less clarity on how family dynamics influence children, especially regarding the relationship quality between mothers and fathers and its association with children's

outcomes. In this research, the authors utilized data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (N = 773) to explore the connection between couple supportiveness in stable cohabiting families and children's externalizing and internalizing behavioral issues from ages 3 to 9. They discovered that increased parental support is slightly linked to reduced behavioral issues in children. They additionally discovered some evidence indicating that the quality of parents' relationships and children's behavioral issues are mutually influential. In general, this research indicates that increased positive interactions between couples are advantageous for children living with both of their biological parents.

Amatya, K. (2014) observed partner violence (OPV) during childhood and adolescence can greatly influence psychological well-being throughout one's development. Research has indicated that parenting influences, perceived social support, coping mechanisms, age at exposure, and gender can affect the link between WPV and outcomes. Findings showed that exposure to verbal violence was a key predictor of emotional dysregulation, whereas physical violence and overall WPV were not significant. Parental warmth influenced the connection between all 3 forms of WPV and emotional dysregulation, while control of parents and the age of onset served as moderators for physical and total WPV. Social support influenced the connection between exposure to verbal violence and difficulties in emotional regulation. Coping strategies and gender were not identified as significant moderators.

Goeke-Morey M. et al, (2013) studied that while the sensitization hypothesis is crucial for process-oriented interpretations of how marital conflict affects children, there have been limited longitudinal tests of the theory's claims. In this prospective, longitudinal study (n = 297 families), hierarchical linear modeling was employed to evaluate shifts in the aspects of responding to conflict (i.e., emotional, cognitive, and behavioral) among youth aged 8 to 19 years over a period of 3 consecutive years. In line with the sensitization hypothesis, greater exposure to hostile marital discord was linked to heightened levels of children's negative emotions, feelings of threat, self-blame, and doubts regarding resolution. In most cases, the outcomes were predominantly similar for both boys and girls, as well as for younger and older children.

Guajardo N. et al, (2009) incorporated observational and self-report assessments to investigate the relationships between parental stress, parenting practices, child behavior, and children's understanding of mind and emotions. Eighty-three parents and their children aged 3 to 5 took part. Parents filled out assessments regarding parental stress, parenting styles (laxness, overreactivity), and child behavior (internalizing, externalizing); children took measures for language, theory of mind, and emotional understanding. Parent-child interactions were similarly recorded (N=47). Parental laxness and stress related to parenting were predictors of children's theory of mind abilities, while the use of imitative gestures and vocalizations by parents contributed unique variance in their understanding of emotions. Connections were also observed between children's behavior and their understanding of emotions. The findings support both direct and indirect links between interactions between parents and children and the development of early social cognition.

Cummings E., et al, (2009) investigated the deficits in knowledge about the interplay between constructive and destructive marital conflict and children's prosocial behavior from a process perspective. Data were collected from a three-wave longitudinal study among 235 families with children between the ages of 5 and 7 years at wave 1. Interrelations between constructive and destructive marital conflict, children's emotional security, positive parenting, and children's prosocial behavior were addressed employing structural equation modeling techniques. Children's emotional security even after adjusting for baseline levels of children's prosocial behavior at wave 1 was used as a mediating variable interlinking both types of marital conflict with children's prosocial behavior across time.

Osborn L. & Reed P. (2009) examined two studies lasting 9 to 10 months (N = 137) explored the relationship between parenting stress and behavioral issues in children with autistic spectrum disorders (ASDs). Study 1 concentrated on very young children, while Study 2 included a broader age range of children; both studies evaluated these factors at two different times. The researchers observed a significant link between stress from parenting and issues in child behavior after accounting for additional factors, like the severity of ASD and cognitive functioning (Study 1 and 2). Nevertheless, Study 1 showed that when the children were at a very young age (2:6–4:0 years), the severity of ASD was most closely linked to parenting stress. Furthermore, both Study 1 and Study 2 showed that

parenting stress at Time 1 was a more significant predictor of child behavior issues at Time 2, rather than the other way around.

Huth-Bocks A. & Hughes H. (2008) examined that kids who are exposed to intimate partner violence often face various negative effects, such as emotional and behavioral issues; nonetheless, the mechanisms explaining this connection remain unclear. There is substantial evidence indicating that stress in parenting directly affects children's adjustment issues and parenting practices; these parenting practices, in turn, have consistently been linked to children's outcomes. The theory that parenting acts as a mediator in the connection between parenting stress and children's behavioral and emotional issues, as proposed by Abidin's model, was examined within a group of 190 abused women and their children aged 4 to 12 years. No evidence for mediation was identified for outcomes reported by either mothers or children. Parental stress significantly influenced children's behavioral and emotional issues. These results impact the feasibility of Abidin's model and also inform interventions for abused women that focus on parenting stress.

Buehler, C., et al, (2006) explored how parenting clarifies the current relationship between hostility between parents and problematic behavior in adolescents. A theoretical spillover model was examined, detailing five facets of both the parents parenting that could relate to hostile interactions between parents: harshness, inconsistency, psychological intrusiveness, and reduced levels of accepting and monitoring awareness and knowledge. The sample included 416 young adolescents along with their married parents. The link between hostility within the parental relations and externalizing issues in adolescents was uniquely mediated by the harshness of both fathers and mothers, reduced levels of fathers' monitoring awareness, and psychological intrusiveness of the mother. The link between hostility between parents and adolescent internalizing was uniquely mediated by mothers' severity, psychological intrusion, and reduced acceptance levels. These trends were alike for both sons and daughters.

Jenkins. J., et al, (2005) conducted a study within families including both biological and stepfamilies, examined the reciprocal effects of marital conflict on children's behavioral issues. Children aged 4 to 17 years (N=296) living in 127 families selected from a general population study were examined at Time 1 and then again 2 years afterward. These hierarchical data were examined through multilevel modeling, adjusting for prior child behavior or marital discord. The behavior of children also predicted a rise in marital conflict, especially in stepfamilies. Variations among siblings regarding exposure to conflict and the degree to which they served as a source of disputes grew more in stepfamilies compared to biological families. Over time, boys encountered more conflict than girls did.

Cummings E. et al, (2004) looked into how children react aggressively right after witnessing marital conflict. The study included 108 families with children aged 8 to 16 (53 boys, 55 girls), whose diaries on children's responses to marital conflicts at home were filled out by 103 mothers (n = 578 entries) and 95 fathers (n = 377 entries) over a span of 15 days. Children's reactions to analog representations of marital conflict strategies were also gathered. Witnessing marital conflict raised the chances of aggressive behavior in children when they were exposed to harmful conflict tactics and negative parental emotions, while constructive conflict strategies and positive parental feelings reduced the likelihood of aggression. Confrontational reactions to conflict in both domestic settings and laboratories forecasted externalizing behavioral issues. Separate diary entries from fathers and mothers, along with children's reactions to simulated conflict scenarios, yielded largely consistent results. A hypothesis regarding exposure to marital conflict as a factor affecting child aggression is examined.

Benzies, K. et al, (2004) explored how the early family setting and infant traits are related to behavioral issues in children at the age of 7. 62 mothers and 56 fathers with preterm and full-term boys and girls filled out the Parenting Stress Index, Dyadic Adjustment Scale, and an assessment of socioeconomic status throughout the child's initial year. When their child reached 7 years old, the parents filled out the Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory Intensity and Problem scales. Hierarchical regression analyses indicated that parental stress due to their child's distractibility in infancy forecasted the occurrence of childhood behavior issues at age 7 for mothers and the effects of these behaviors on both the mother and father. The quality of the marriage during early life forecasted the incidence of behavioral issues noted by fathers. Public health nurses are ideally situated to evaluate parenting stress and marital wellness while offering assistance to families during the initial phases of parenthood.

Amato, P. R., & Booth, A. (2001) explored a study based on a national longitudinal study involving 297 parents

and their married children, the authors discovered that parental marital conflict was inversely connected to the marital harmony of the children and directly associated with their marital discord. Parental divorce, life-course factors, socioeconomic status, retrospective evaluations of parent-child dynamics, or psychological distress did not mediate the transfer of marital quality. Children's memories of parental conflict, nonetheless, accounted for approximately fifty percent of the link between parents' accounts of marital discord and children's accounts of discord in their own marriages. Parental behaviors that are most likely to forecast problematic marriages in children included jealousy, being overbearing, having a quick temper, being critical, being irritable, and not communicating with the partner.

Harrist, A. W., & Ainslie, R. C. (1998) studied that to date, the precise mechanisms by which marital conflict influences children's behavioral problems are not well elucidated. In this research, three classes of variables—marital discord, parent-child relationship quality, and children's interpersonal sensitivity—were used as predictors of the social behavioral profiles of a sample of 45 five-year-olds. Evidence showed indirect relationships between marital conflict and social withdrawal and aggression: Marital conflict predicted lower quality parent-child relationships, which in turn predicted higher levels of child aggression. For child social withdrawal, the prediction from marital conflict was mediated through parent-child relationship quality and child interpersonal factors.

Fincham, F. D., & Osborne, L. N. (1993) studied that while a connection between marital functioning and child adjustment is commonly acknowledged by clinicians and researchers, empirical evidence indicates that the strength of this link is low and varies significantly between studies. Examining this situation highlights the necessity for a more detailed definition of marital conflict and child adjustment, as well as the importance of linking certain elements of conflict to specific child results. We thus provide a reassessment of the concept of marital conflict and highlight various conflict dimensions that seem important for comprehending its possible effects on children. Ultimately, multiple pathways for upcoming research are emphasized that could foster better integration between clinical practice and research.

Katz, L. F., & Gottman, J. M. (1993) presented the findings of a long-term study regarding the impact of marital interaction on children. The observational assessment of marital interactions during conflict resolution, conducted when the children were five years old, forecasted teachers' evaluations of internalizing and externalizing behaviors when the children reached eight years old. Two separate and unrelated patterns of marital interaction were associated with particular types of child outcomes. The Husband's Angry and Withdrawn pattern forecasted internalizing behaviors in children. Marital satisfaction and child temperament were not connected to child outcomes, nor did they influence marital patterns to create deficits in child adjustment. Results indicate that the particular actions couples employ in settling marital conflicts may have varying effects on the occurrence of externalizing and internalizing behavior patterns in children.

Jenkins, J. M., & Smith, M. A. (1991) explored the aspects of the parents' marriage that may increase the likelihood of children experiencing behavioral and emotional issues. Data from 119 households from the general population with a child aged 9 to 12 years were examined for this study. The connection between children's emotional and behavioral issues and open parental conflict, hidden tension between parents, and differences in parenting practices was evaluated. It was discovered that overt parental conflict has the strongest correlation with children's emotional and behavioral issues, based on reports from mothers, fathers, and children regarding the children's symptoms, while accounting for other factors of marital discord. Elements of the parent-child dynamic were proposed as mediating factors in the connection between parental conflict and children's emotional and behavioral issues, but the findings did not back this proposition.

Holden, G. W., & Ritchie, K. L. (1991) investigated the relationships among marital conflict, parent actions, and child actions in a study involving 37 abused women and 37 control mothers along with their children, aged 2-8 years. It was anticipated that violent fathers would show greater irritability but lower involvement, while battered mothers would experience higher stress and demonstrate less consistent discipline; both parents were reported to use fewer positive and more negative approaches to child-rearing compared to families in the comparison group. Based on maternal self-reports and mother-child observations, the only notable difference in self-reports among the groups of mothers was the level of stress and inconsistency in parenting, although all anticipated differences were evident according to the mothers' reports on the two groups of fathers.. Children from violent families exhibited heightened internalizing behavior issues, more troubled temperaments, and greater aggression compared

to peers. Maternal stress and paternal irritability were the top two predictors of child behavior issues in violent families, while only maternal stress was significant in comparison families.

Smith, M. A., & Jenkins, J. M. (1991) explored the link between marital discord and childhood behavioral issues in a sample of families selected from the general population. Eighty-three families, previously assessed as having disharmonious marriages, were paired with an equal number of families with harmonious marital relationships. Mothers, fathers, and kids were interviewed through a semi structured interview approach. Children residing in discordant households experienced notably more issues than those from harmonious environments, and controlling for confounding factors like maternal mental health did not change this association. The primary effects observed were related to antisocial symptoms. One potential interpretation is that mothers viewed their sons as being more impacted by marital discord, whereas findings from children indicated that both boys and girls were similarly affected.

Reid, W. J., & Crisafulli, A. (1990) studied the connection between marital conflict and children's behavioral issues was analyzed via a meta-analysis of previous research findings. The sample included all published research up to 1988 that satisfied the criteria for the meta-analysis and could be found via a combined computer and manual searching of the literature. Child behavior issues were characterized as conduct issues, omitting internalized challenges, like anxiety. Four hypotheses were formulated based on recent reviews of research concerning this subject: The correlation between marital discord and child behavior issues will be (1) generally positive and will be stronger (2) for boys compared to girls, (3) in instances relying solely on parent self-report data rather than those incorporating external data, (4) The findings corroborated the initial three hypotheses. Few indications were discovered linking marital conflict to the behavioral issues of girls. Results are examined regarding their theoretical and methodological significance, as well as in connection to a recent analysis of studies on sex differences in children's responses to divorce.

Grych, J. H., & Fincham, F. D. (1990) studied that marital issues have been associated with various indicators of maladjustment in children. While many factors of this relationship have been recognized, the mechanism through which exposure to interparental conflict leads to adjustment issues in children remains largely uninvestigated. The connection between marital conflict and child maladjustment is critically assessed, and a framework is provided that organizes current studies while proposing avenues for future research into processes that could explain this relationship. As per the framework, children's comprehension of marital conflict mediates its effects, influenced by contextual, cognitive, and developmental elements. The framework's implications for children's adaptation are examined.

Jouriles E. et al, (1989) studied the association between child problems and interspousal violence was examined after controlling for the parents' general marital conflict. Eighty-seven couples who presented for marital therapy with children between the ages of 5 and 12 years were given the treatment. Partners completed measures of marital aggression, relationship conflict, child problems, and family history. Marital aggression contributed distinct variance to the prediction of conduct disorder, personality disorder, inadequacy-immaturity, and clinical levels of maladaptive child behavior after adjusting for marital discord, child's age, child's sex, and the interaction of marital discord with child's sex.

Jouriles E. et al, (1988) examined the relations among marital conflict, parenting behavior, and behavioral problems in toddlers. Sixty mother-toddler pairs were used as participants. Mothers completed measures of global marital satisfaction, observable marital discord, and behavioral problems in toddlers. Maternal care and toddler misbehavior were assessed in a lab observation. Marital discord was positively correlated with observable toddler deviance and maternal reports of behavioral problems. Marital conflict was positively correlated with the frequency of maternal disapproval comments targeted at sons' misbehaviors and inversely related to the ratio of disapproval comments to daughters' misbehaviors. The present results indicate that marital conflict is associated with toddlers' behavioral problems. The results further suggest the importance of examining parenting practices and children's characteristics that may mediate the relationship between marital conflict and child behavioral problems.

Dadds M. et al, (1987) conducted systematic observation of parent-parent interactions in 4 families receiving

behavioral parent training. All 4 families had a defiant child and presented with evidence of persistent marital conflict. Families received baseline assessments, child management training (CMT), partner support training (PST), and follow-up as part of a multiple-baseline-across-families design. Results showed that both at baseline and CMT, parents had negative interactions with their partners, especially during times of child misbehavior. For most parents, successful implementation of the child management strategies was observed despite the negative parental interactions. Few supportive interactions were observed. During PST, there was a reduction in aversive behavior and an increase in problem-solving among most parents. Little variation was observed in supportive actions. The results support Patterson and Reid's (1984) and others' theories of the functional relationship between children's aggressive behaviors and family interaction systems, including marriage dynamics.

Emery, R. E., & O'Leary, K. D. (1984) examined that mother reports of their marital relationships, and reports of their children's behavior at home and teacher reports submitted about the children's behavior in a classroom environment were assessed using well-validated scales. While a reported association between indicators of marital conflict and the frequency of children's problem behaviors was noted, this was described as being fairly weak. The present findings are compared to earlier research employing clinical samples and non-independent ratings in examining the association between children's behavioral problems and marital problems. Generally, it appears that different methodological strategies result in very different conclusions regarding the strength of the interparental conflict-behavioral problems in children association.

Emery, R. E., & O'Leary, K. D. (1982) saw that children's experiences of feeling unaccepted and their views on their parents' marital conflicts were linked to parental indicators of marital contentment and issues in the children's behavior. In a study of 50 children from a clinic, it was discovered that (1) as anticipated, marital conflict was most closely linked to behavioral issues in boys, (2) boys and girls recognized parental marital discord with similar and moderate accuracy, and (3) children's feelings of being unaccepted had no significant correlation with assessments of marital discord. These results are examined in relation to causal explanations of how marital conflict affects children.

Porter, B., & O'Leary, K. D. (1980) studied the data on explicit marital hostility, overall marital adjustment, and children's behavioral issues were collected from the parents of 64 children referred to a child psychology clinic. Comparisons were made between children's scores on indicators of general marital dissatisfaction and visible marital aggression. Open marital conflict was significantly linked to various behavioral issues in boys. Nonetheless, neither overall marital dissatisfaction nor explicit marital conflict was connected to problem behaviors in girls. Distinct findings and potential explanations for the varying results concerning boys and girls were examined.

CHAPTER- 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview of the Chapter:

This chapter outlines the research procedure and methodology employed in this study. To begin with, the chapter defines the research design of the study, encompassing research hypotheses, participants, sampling procedure, and data collection. It also explains the data collection instruments and illustrates the statistical techniques applied for data analysis.

3.2 Aim:

The present study was aimed at investigating the effect of relationship stress between parents on children's behavior.

3.3 Objectives:

1. To determine the relationship between stress in parental relationships and behavioral problems in children.
2. To investigate the effect of parental stress on children's emotional health.
3. To measure the impact of parental stress on the social adjustment of children.

3.4 Hypotheses:

H1: Higher parental relationship stress will be associated with greater behavioral difficulties in children.

H2: Parental stress will have a significant impact on children's emotional well-being and social adjustment.

3.5 Sample:

3.5.1 Sample Description:

Parents with children aged between 4 and 18 years were data collected from. Participants were chosen after they had given their informed consent. The researcher explained to them in detail the purpose of the study, and any questions or concerns they had were addressed.

3.5.2 Sample Size:

The total sample size for the study was **N = 120**.

3.5.3 Sampling Technique:

A purposive sampling method was employed in this research.

(Purposive sampling enables researchers to choose participants on the basis of characteristics pertinent to the purpose of the study.)

3.5.4 Sample Characteristics:

Inclusion Criteria:

1. Parents of children between the ages of 4 to 18 years.
2. Parents currently in a relationship (married or living together).
3. Parents who are skilled in Hindi or English.
4. Parents who give consent to take part in the study.

Exclusion Criteria:

1. Single parents or divorced/separated persons.
2. Parents with children out of the age group of 4–18 years.
3. Refusal of parents to cooperate in the study.
4. Parents with severe psychiatric or cognitive disorders.

3.6 Research Design:

The research design employed in this current study is a correlational research design because it seeks to establish the relationship between stress in parental relationships and children's behavioral outcomes.

3.7 Statistical Analysis:

The information collected was coded, tabulated, and analyzed on IBM SPSS version 25. Pearson correlation coefficient was employed to determine the association between variables, and regression analysis was done to test the predictive role of parental relationship stress on children's behavior and emotional adjustment.

3.8 Socio-Demographic Details:

A The researcher used a semi-structured questionnaire self-administered to obtain demographic data such as age, gender, children's number, child's age, family composition, parents' education, and occupation.

3.9 Tools Used:

3.9.1 Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI) – Funk & Rogge (2007):

The Couple Satisfaction Index is a self-report measure, commonly used to evaluate the relationship satisfaction quality in couples. The measure consists of a set of items that address affection, resolving conflict, communication, and closeness. High scores reflect more satisfaction in the relationship. Excellent reliability and validity have been evidenced for CSI by several studies.

3.9.2 Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) – Goodman (1997):

The SDQ is a short behavioral screening questionnaire that is used to measure emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationship problems, and prosocial behavior among children. The parents complete the questionnaire, and it can be used in children between 4–17 years. It yields a Total Difficulties Score as well as subscale scores, so it's an inclusive tool for assessing children's behavior.

3.10 Procedure:

The research was carried out under ethical standards to ensure that the participants' information remains confidential and that they volunteered their participation. Once informed consent was given, parents were informed about the aim of the study. Demographic data was gathered, after which the Couple Satisfaction Index and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire were administered. Any questions or issues concerning the questionnaires were explained. Individual scoring for each instrument was carried out once data was gathered. Data was then entered into SPSS software and statistically analyzed.

3.11 Ethical Considerations:

1. The research followed the ethical standards set by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2003) – Section 8: Research and Publication.
2. Permission to conduct the study was granted from the research committee of Amity University.
3. Volunteers were informed of the research's objective, and confidentiality of their answers was guaranteed.
4. Voluntary participation was allowed, and the participants were free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

CHAPTER- 4 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Data Analysis

Table 1: Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	74	61.7	61.7	61.7
	Male	44	36.7	36.7	98.3
	Prefer not to say	2	1.7	1.7	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	100.0	

The gender distribution of respondents in the survey indicates a higher participation rate among females. Out of 120 total respondents, 74 individuals (61.7%) identified as female, making up the majority of the sample. Male respondents constituted 44 individuals (36.7%), while only 2 individuals (1.7%) chose not to disclose their gender. This skewed distribution suggests that female perspectives are more prominently represented in the data, which could influence the overall interpretation of survey findings, especially if gender-based preferences or opinions are relevant to the study's objectives.

The cumulative percentage data further reveals that once the female and male categories are accounted for, 98.3% of the total sample has been represented, indicating limited non-disclosure. The low number of respondents who preferred not to state their gender suggests that most participants were comfortable disclosing this demographic information. This could reflect a level of trust in the survey process or the perceived non-sensitive nature of the question.

Table 2: Education Level

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High School	1	.8	.8	.8
	Other	5	4.2	4.2	5.0
	Postgraduate	93	77.5	77.5	82.5
	Undergraduate	21	17.5	17.5	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	100.0	

The level of education data illustrates that the majority of respondents possess a high level of academic attainment. A significant 77.5% (93 respondents) reported having postgraduate qualifications, indicating a highly educated sample group. Additionally, 17.5% (21 respondents) identified as undergraduates, making them the second-largest group. This shows that 95% of the sample have at least an undergraduate degree, emphasizing a predominantly well-educated respondent base.

In contrast, only 5 respondents (4.2%) selected 'Other' as their education level, and just 1 respondent (0.8%) indicated high school as their highest level of education. The cumulative data confirms that 100% of the respondents completed this question, offering a complete view of the sample's academic profile. The dominance of postgraduate qualifications could suggest a more informed or professional demographic, which may influence how questions, particularly those related to technical or policy matters, are interpreted and answered.

4.2 Result

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics CSI					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
CSI TOTAL	120	14	81	61.00	13.993
Valid N (listwise)	120				

The descriptive statistics of the Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI), based on responses from 120 participants, show a broad range in satisfaction scores. The minimum score recorded was 14, and the maximum was 81, indicating a wide spectrum of relationship satisfaction among the respondents. The mean score was 61.00, with a standard deviation of 13.993, suggesting that while the average level of couple satisfaction is relatively high, there is a significant variation among individuals. This variation implies that while many respondents are experiencing high levels of satisfaction, a notable portion of the sample may be facing issues in their relationships.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
EMOTIONAL TOTAL	120	0	10	2.35	2.455
CONDUCT PROBLEMS	120	0	9	2.77	1.565

HYPERACTIVITY INATTENTION	120	0	9	4.69	1.544
PEER RELATION PROBLEM	120	0	10	3.00	1.970
PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR	120	0	10	7.47	2.425
Valid N (listwise)	120				

The additional descriptive statistics explore various dimensions of emotional and behavioral well-being. Emotional problems recorded a mean score of 2.35 with a standard deviation of 2.455, indicating generally low emotional distress among respondents, though the standard deviation suggests individual differences. Conduct problems had a mean of 2.77, showing slightly higher issues in behavior regulation, but still remaining on the lower end of the scale. Hyperactivity and inattention, however, had a notably higher mean of 4.69, suggesting that issues like restlessness and lack of concentration are relatively more common in this sample.

Peer relation problems averaged 3.00, indicating moderate difficulties in interpersonal interactions, while prosocial behavior, which refers to positive social actions such as helping and cooperating, had the high mean score of 7.47, with a standard deviation of 2.425. This suggests that most respondents exhibit strong social skills and positive behavior toward others. The contrast between high prosocial behavior and moderately high hyperactivity/inattention could point toward complex behavioral profiles, where individuals may be socially positive but still struggle with attention regulation or impulsivity.

Table 5: Correlations

		CSI TOTAL	SDQ TOTAL
CSI TOTAL	Pearson Correlation	1	-.558**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	120	120
SDQ TOTAL	Pearson Correlation	-.558**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	120	120

H1: Higher parental relationship stress will be associated with greater behavioral difficulties in children.

The correlation analysis between **Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI TOTAL)** and **Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ TOTAL)** reveals a **significant negative relation** in the 2 variables, with a **Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.558** and a **p-value of 0.000** ($p < 0.01$). This means that as **parental relationship satisfaction decreases (indicating higher relationship stress)**, children's behavioral difficulties, as measured by the SDQ, tend to increase. The moderate to strong negative correlation supports the idea that strained relationships between parents may adversely affect a child's emotional and behavioral well-being.

This finding aligns well with existing psychological and developmental theories which suggest that conflict and tension between parents create an unstable and emotionally charged environment for children. Such environments can lead to increased stress in children, potentially resulting in problems like emotional dysregulation, attention issues, and conduct difficulties. These results support the proposed hypothesis and highlight the importance of a harmonious parental relationship in promoting healthy behavioral development in children.

Table 6: Regressions analysis

Model1 Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.558 ^a	.311	.305		11.664

a. Predictors: (Constant), SDQ TOTAL						
ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	7247.637	1	7247.637	53.270	.000 ^b
	Residual	16054.363	118	136.054		
	Total	23302.000	119			

a. D V: CSI TOTAL
b. Predictors: (Constant), SDQ TOTAL

H2: Parental stress will have a significant impact on children's emotional well-being and social adjustment.

The regression analysis examines the effect of children's behavioral difficulties (SDQ TOTAL) on parental relationship satisfaction (CSI TOTAL). The model summary reveals an R value of 0.558, indicating a moderate negative correlation, and an R Square 0.311, which means that approximately 31.1% of the variance in parental relationship satisfaction can be explained by children's behavioral scores. The Adjusted R Square of 0.305 ssy themodel's validity by accounting for the number of predictors, and the standards error of 11.664 reflects the average deviation of actual CSI scores from the predicted values.

4.3 DISCUSSION

The effecting of relationship stress in parents on children's behavior is a critical area of concern in developmental and family psychology. When parents experience ongoing conflict, emotional tension, or poor communication, it often creates a stressful home environment that children are highly sensitive to, regardless of their age. Children tend to internalize or externalize the tension they witness, leading to a variety of behavioral issues. These may include increased aggression, anxiety, defiance, withdrawal, or difficulty concentrating. The stress stemming from parental discord can disturb a child's emotional security, making them feel uncertain, unsafe, or even responsible for the conflict.

Research consistently shows that high leve1 of interparental conflict are associated with greater emotional problems in children. For instance, children exposed to chronic marital discord may develop internalizing like depression, or problems like hyperactivity, conduct disorders, and peer-related difficulties. This happens because children, especially at a young age, lack the emotional tools to process complex relationship dynamics and instead react behaviorally to the stress they experience. Furthermore, when parents are preoccupied with their own conflicts, they may display inconsistent or harsh parenting styles, further exacerbating behavioral challenges in children.

Moreover, the emotional climate created by parental stress affects not only immediate behaviors but also long-term developmental outcomes. Studies shown that child from high-conflict families are likely to experience difficulties in forming healthy social relationships and maintaining emotional regulation. They may also carry the relational patterns they observe into adulthood, affecting their own interpersonal relationships. In households where conflict is not constructively resolved, children may model negative communication patterns or develop maladaptive coping strategies.

The findings offer significant insight in relation between parental stress and child's behavior outcomes. Through a combination of descriptive statistics, correlation, and analysis of regression, the study highlights how the of parent relationship—measured through the Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI)—relates closely to various aspects of children's behavior, measured by the Strengthis and Difficulty Questionnaire (SDQ). The CSI scores displayed a relatively wide range, indicating that while many respondents reported a high level of relationship satisfaction, a considerable number experienced lower satisfaction levels, hinting at underlying relationship stress.

From the descriptive statistics of children's behavioral traits, it is evident that while prosocial behavior scores were relatively high (mean = 7.47), children also showed moderate issues with hyperactivity/inattention (mean = 4.69) and peer relation problems (mean = 3.00). These findings suggest a duality—many children display positive social

tendencies, yet a significant portion also faces challenges in self-regulation and interpersonal interactions. This complexity in behavioral outcomes may be a reflection of emotional tension in the household environment caused by parental stress.

The correlation analysis further solidifies this connection. A statistically significant and moderately strong negative correlation (-0.558) was found between CSI scores and SDQ scores. This means that as parental relationship satisfaction decreases, children tend to exhibit more behavioral difficulties. These difficulties may manifest as emotional distress, conduct problems, or attention-related issues. Such findings align with existing literature suggesting that conflict and emotional strain within a family system can deeply affect the children emotional and developmental health.

The regression analysis added a predictive dimension to this relationship. The model showed that children's behavioral issues explain approximately 31.1% of the variation in parental relationship satisfaction, which is substantial in psychological and social research. This not only supports the hypothesis that parental stress impacts children's emotional and social adjustment (H2), but also indicates a possible bidirectional influence—children's behavioral issues might also contribute to stress in the parents' relationship. Thus, a cycle of negative interaction could be perpetuated within the family structure, reinforcing both child maladjustment and parental dissatisfaction.

The implications of the findings are profound for practitioners, educators, and policymakers. Interventions aimed at improving family dynamics must consider both parental and child well-being as interconnected. Programs that support parental communication, conflict resolution, and stress management could indirectly benefit children's behavior. Similarly, providing early emotional and behavioral support to children might ease the strain on parents, promoting healthier family environments.

In conclusion, the study confirms that relationship stress between parents significantly affects children's behavior, with emotional and social consequences that may persist over time. Addressing these dynamics holistically—by supporting both the parents' relationship health and the child's psychological development—may offer the most effective path forward in nurturing well-adjusted families. Future studies explore additional mediating variables such like socioeconomic status, parenting styles, or the presence of support systems, to better understand the nuances of this relationship.

Similarly, Li, Ye, Han, and Zhou (2025) explored the link between interparental conflict as well as behavioral issues in children through a study involving 1,171 mothers of primary school students. Their findings showed that negative parenting behaviors mediated this relationship, and children with great negative emotionality were more vulnerable to behavioral problems under such conditions. Zhou, & Cao(2017) also emphasized the role of parental interactions in early childhood, showing that interparental conflict predicted externalizing behavior problems in infants, with maternal sensitivity acting as a buffer for internalizing issues. In another longitudinal investigation, Davies, Hentges, and Sturge-Apple (2015) followed children from ages 2 to 10 and found maladaptive marriage conflict was linked to a greater risk of internalizing problems years later. The impact was mediated by the level of security in the parent-child relationship, underlining the longterm emotional consequences of exposure to familial stress.

References

1. Amato, P. R., & Booth, A. (2001). The legacy of parents' marital discord: consequences for children's marital quality. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 81(4), 627.
2. Amatya, K. (2014). Witnessing Partner Violence in Childhood: Factors Influencing Emotion Regulation Difficulties in College Students.
3. Benzies, K. M., Harrison, M. J., & Magill-Evans, J. (2004). Parenting stress, marital quality, and child behavior problems at age 7 years. *Public Health Nursing*, 21(2), 111-121.
4. Buehler, C., Benson, M. J., & Gerard, J. M. (2006). Interparental hostility and early adolescent problem behavior: The mediating role of specific aspects of parenting. *Journal of research on adolescence*, 16(2), 265-292.

5. Craft, A. L., Perry-Jenkins, M., & Newkirk, K. (2021). The implications of early marital conflict for Children's development. *Journal of child and family studies*, 30, 292-310.
6. Cummings, E. M., Goeke-Morey, M. C., & Papp, L. M. (2004). Everyday marital conflict and child aggression. *Journal of abnormal child psychology*, 32, 191-202.
7. Dadds, M. R., Sanders, M. R., Behrens, B. C., & James, J. E. (1987). Marital discord and child behavior problems: A description of family interactions during treatment. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 16(3), 192-203.
8. Davies, P. T., Hentges, R. F., & Sturge-Apple, M. L. (2015). Interparental conflict, children's security with parents, and long-term risk of internalizing problems: A longitudinal study from ages 2 to 10. *Development and Psychopathology*, 27(4pt1), 1487-1498. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579415000881>
9. El-Sheikh, M., Hinnant, J. B., & Erath, S. A. (2015). VI. Marital conflict, vagal regulation, and children's sleep: A longitudinal investigation. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 80(1), 89-106.
10. Emery, R. E., & O'Leary, K. D. (1982). Children's perceptions of marital discord and behavior problems of boys and girls. *Journal of Abnormal child psychology*, 10, 11-24.
11. Emery, R. E., & O'Leary, K. D. (1984). Marital discord and child behavior problems in a nonclinic sample. *Journal of abnormal child psychology*, 12, 411-420.
12. Fincham, F. D., & Osborne, L. N. (1993). Marital conflict and children: Retrospect and prospect. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 13(1), 75-88.
13. Fosco, G. M., Weymouth, B. B., & Feinberg, M. E. (2023). Interparental conflict, family climate, and threat appraisals: Early adolescent exposure and young adult psychopathology risk. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 37(5), 731.
14. Gao, M., Du, H., Davies, P. T., & Cummings, E. M. (2019). Marital conflict behaviors and parenting: Dyadic links over time. *Family relations*, 68(1), 135-149.
15. Goeke-Morey, M. C., Papp, L. M., & Cummings, E. M. (2013). Changes in marital conflict and youths' responses across childhood and adolescence: A test of sensitization. *Development and psychopathology*, 25(1), 241-251.
16. Goldberg, J. S., & Carlson, M. J. (2014). Parents' relationship quality and children's behavior in stable married and cohabiting families. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 76(4), 762-777.
17. Grych, J. H., & Fincham, F. D. (1990). Marital conflict and children's adjustment: a cognitive-contextual framework. *Psychological bulletin*, 108(2), 267.
18. Guajardo, N. R., Snyder, G., & Petersen, R. (2009). Relationships among parenting practices, parental stress, child behaviour, and children's social-cognitive development. *Infant and Child Development: An International Journal of Research and Practice*, 18(1), 37-60.
19. Harold, G. T., Aitken, J. J., & Shelton, K. H. (2007). Inter-parental conflict and children's academic attainment: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 48(12), 1223-1232. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.2007.01793.x>
20. Harrist, A. W., & Ainslie, R. C. (1998). Marital discord and child behavior problems: Parent-child relationship quality and child interpersonal awareness as mediators. *Journal of Family Issues*, 19(2), 140-163.
21. Holden, G. W., & Ritchie, K. L. (1991). Linking extreme marital discord, child rearing, and child behavior problems: Evidence from battered women. *Child development*, 62(2), 311-327.
22. Huth-Bocks, A. C., & Hughes, H. M. (2008). Parenting stress, parenting behavior, and children's adjustment in families experiencing intimate partner violence. *Journal of family violence*, 23, 243-251.

23. Jenkins, J., Simpson, A., Dunn, J., Rasbash, J., & O'Connor, T. G. (2005). Mutual influence of marital conflict and children's behavior problems: Shared and nonshared family risks. *Child development*, 76(1), 24-39.
24. Jenkins, J. M., & Smith, M. A. (1991). Marital disharmony and children's behaviour problems: Aspects of a poor marriage that affect children adversely. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 32(5), 793-810.
25. Jouriles, E. N., Murphy, C. M., & O'Leary, K. D. (1989). Interspousal aggression, marital discord, and child problems. *Journal of consulting and clinical psychology*, 57(3), 453.
26. Jouriles, E. N., Pfiffner, L. J., & O'leary, S. G. (1988). Marital conflict, parenting, and toddler conduct problems. *Journal of abnormal child psychology*, 16, 197-206.
27. Katz, L. F., & Gottman, J. M. (1993). Patterns of marital conflict predict children's internalizing and externalizing behaviors. *Developmental psychology*, 29(6), 940.
28. Li, Y ., Ye, Y ., Han, Z. R., & Zhou, X. (2025). Parental conflict and child behaviour problems: The role of parenting behaviours and child temperament. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405629.2025.2467464>
29. Liu, L., & Wang, M. (2015). Parenting stress and children's problem behavior in China: the mediating role of parental psychological aggression. *Journal of family psychology*, 29(1), 20.
30. Madigan, S., Plamondon, A., & Jenkins, J. M. (2017). Marital conflict trajectories and associations with children's disruptive behavior. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 79(2), 437-450.
31. Mak, M. C. K., Yin, L., Li, M., Cheung, R. Y . H., & Oon, P. T. (2020). The relation between parenting stress and child behavior problems: Negative parenting styles as mediator. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 29, 2993-3003
32. Mark, K. M., & Pike, A. (2017). Links between marital quality, the mother-child relationship and child behavior: A multi-level modeling approach. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 41(2), 285-294.
33. McCoy, K., Cummings, E. M., & Davies, P. T. (2009). Constructive and destructive marital conflict, emotional security and children's prosocial behavior. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 50(3), 270-279.
34. Osborne, L. A., & Reed, P. (2009). The relationship between parenting stress and behavior problems of children with autistic spectrum disorders. *Exceptional Children*, 76(1), 54-73
35. Porter, B., & O'Leary, K. D. (1980). Marital discord and childhood behavior problems. *Journal of abnormal child psychology*, 8, 287-295.
36. Puff, J., & Renk, K. (2014). Relationships among parents' economic stress, parenting, and young children's behavior problems. *Child Psychiatry & Human Development*, 45, 712-727.
37. Rafiq, N., & Rafiq, N. (2016). Impacts of marital conflicts on child development. *i-Manager's Journal on Nursing*, 6(4), 30.
38. Reid, W. J., & Crisafulli, A. (1990). Marital discord and child behavior problems: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 18, 105-117.
39. Smith, M. A., & Jenkins, J. M. (1991). The effects of marital disharmony on prepubertal children. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 19(6), 625-644.
40. Spinelli, M., Lionetti, F., Pastore, M., & Fasolo, M. (2020). Parents' stress and children's psychological problems

in families facing the COVID-19 outbreak in Italy. *Frontiers in psychology*, 11, 1713

41. Tavassolie, T., Dudding, S., Madigan, A. L., Thorvardarson, E., & Winsler, A. (2016). Differences in perceived parenting style between mothers and fathers: Implications for child outcomes and marital conflict. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 25, 2055-2068.
42. Vaez, E., Indran, R., Abdollahi, A., Juhari, R., & Mansor, M. (2015). How marital relations affect child behavior: review of recent research. *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies*, 10(4), 321-336.
43. Woodman, A. C., Mawdsley, H. P., & Hauser-Cram, P. (2015). Parenting stress and child behavior problems within families of children with developmental disabilities: Transactional relations across 15 years. *Research in developmental disabilities*, 36, 264-276.
44. Zhou, N., Cao, H., & Leerkes, E. M. (2017). Interparental conflict and infants' behavior problems: The mediating role of maternal sensitivity. *Journal of Family Psychology*,

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A **INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

I, hereby give consent for the study conducted by Mehak Rawat, student of BA+MA Clinical psychology department, Amity University, Noida. I have been fully explained by the procedure and I understand that it is completely academic exercise.

Sign:

Name:



APPENDIX B

Socio-Demographic Data Sheet

- **Name**
- **Age**
- **Gender**
- **Education Level**
- **Occupation**



APPENDIX C

Couple Satisfaction Index

Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI-16)

Please indicate the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

Extremely Unhappy 0	Fairly Unhappy 1	A Little Unhappy 2	Happy 3	Very Happy 4	Extremely Happy 5	Perfect 6			
				All the time	Most of the time	More often than not	Occa- sionally	Rarely	Never
				5	4	3	2	1	0

In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?

	Not at all TRUE	A little TRUE	Some- what TRUE	Mostly TRUE	Almost Completely TRUE	Completely TRUE
Our relationship is strong	0	1	2	3	4	5
My relationship with my partner makes me happy	0	1	2	3	4	5
I have a warm and comfortable relationship with my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5
I really feel like part of a team with my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5

	Not at all	A little	Some- what	Mostly	Almost Completely	Completely
How rewarding is your relationship with your partner?	0	1	2	3	4	5
How well does your partner meet your needs?	0	1	2	3	4	5
To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?	0	1	2	3	4	5
In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?	0	1	2	3	4	5

For each of the following items, select the answer that best describes how you feel about your relationship. Base your responses on your first impressions and immediate feelings about the item.

INTERESTING 5 4 3 2 1 0 BORING
BAD 0 1 2 3 4 5 GOOD
FULL 5 4 3 2 1 0 EMPTY
STURDY 5 4 3 2 1 0 FRAGILE
DISCOURAGING 0 1 2 3 4 5 HOPEFUL
ENJOYABLE 5 4 3 2 1 0 MISERABLE

PERMISSION FOR USE: We developed the CSI scales to be freely available for research and clinical use. No further permission is required beyond this form and the authors will not generate study-specific permission letters.

SCORING: To score the CSI-16, you simply sum the responses across all of the items. The point values of each response of each item are shown above. NOTE – When we present the scale to participants, we do not show them those point values. We just give them circles to fill in (on pen-and-paper versions) or radio buttons to click (in online surveys) in place of those point values.

INTERPRETATION: CSI-16 scores can range from 0 to 81. Higher scores indicate higher levels of relationship satisfaction. CSI-16 scores falling below 51.5 suggest notable relationship dissatisfaction.

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

p 4-17

For each item, please mark the box for Not True, Somewhat True or Certainly True. It would help us if you answered all items as best you can even if you are not absolutely certain or the item seems daft! Please give your answers on the basis of the child's behaviour over the last six months.

Child's Name

Male/Female

Date of Birth

	Not True	Somewhat True	Certainly True
Considerate of other people's feelings	☐	☐	☐
Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long	☐	☐	☐
Often complains of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness	☐	☐	☐
Shares readily with other children (treats, toys, pencils etc.)	☐	☐	☐
Often has temper tantrums or hot tempers	☐	☐	☐
Rather solitary, tends to play alone	☐	☐	☐
Generally obedient, usually does what adults request	☐	☐	☐
Many worries, often seems worried	☐	☐	☐
Helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill	☐	☐	☐
Constantly fidgeting or squirming	☐	☐	☐
Has at least one good friend	☐	☐	☐
Often fights with other children or bullies them	☐	☐	☐
Often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful	☐	☐	☐
Generally liked by other children	☐	☐	☐
Easily distracted, concentration wanders	☐	☐	☐
Nervous or clingy in new situations, easily loses confidence	☐	☐	☐
Kind to younger children	☐	☐	☐
Often lies or cheats	☐	☐	☐
Picked on or bullied by other children	☐	☐	☐
Often volunteers to help others (parents, teachers, other children)	☐	☐	☐
Thinks things out before acting	☐	☐	☐
Steals from home, school or elsewhere	☐	☐	☐
Gets on better with adults than with other children	☐	☐	☐
Many fears, easily scared	☐	☐	☐
Sees tasks through to the end, good attention span	☐	☐	☐

Do you have any other comments or concerns?