

# The Impact of Parental Marital Relationships on Children's Multi-domain Development Outcomes

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**Abstract.** Marital relationship is the core relationship of family relationship, which has a very important impact on the stability of the family and the development of children. Previous studies have found that good parental marital relationships favor positive developmental outcomes for children, whereas poorer one lead to poorer developmental outcomes. This study aims to delve into the impact of parental marital relationships on children's individual development. Through detailed analysis of existing research and case studies, we will focus on exploring the profound effects of parental marital relationships on children's social skills, academic performance, and sexual behavior. The paper emphasizes the importance of stable family environments and healthy marital relationships for the proper growth of children and discusses possible intervention measures. The results of this study can improve people's understanding of the impact of marital relationships on children's development outcomes, and also provide empirical support for interventions to improve children's multi-domain development outcomes by improving parents' marital relationships.

**Keywords:** Marital relationships, social skills, academic performance, sexual behavior, children.

## 1. Introduction

Marital relationships are akin to the bedrock upon which the intricate edifice of a family stands, forming an unwavering pillar that provides essential support to the entire family structure. Beyond being the emotional bond that unites spouses, these relationships wield a profound influence that stretches far into the horizons of their offspring's destinies. As our society undergoes a continuous evolution, the unmistakable impact of parental marital relationships on children's lives is coming into sharper focus. In this era of rapid change and transformation, it becomes imperative to embark on a comprehensive exploration into the intricate dynamics of how these relationships resonate within the realms of children's social aptitude, academic achievements, and sexual behaviors. At the core of children's individual development lies the pivotal role played by parental marital relationships—a role deserving of profound analysis. Unhealthy marriages, fraught with conflicts, stand in stark contrast to the blissful harmony of healthy unions. So, what are the positive impacts of healthy marriages on children, and what are the negative effects of problematic marriages on children's development?

The intricate interplay of marital relationships shapes the very tapestry of family life—a tapestry woven with threads of love, respect, and partnership. The emotional resonance between spouses echoes not only within the confines of their relationship but reverberates profoundly within the lives of their children. The trajectory of a child's future is significantly molded by the quality of these relationships, akin to the nurturing hands that mold clay into exquisite forms. As society's landscape evolves, the lines between familial roles and responsibilities become more nuanced, further underscoring the need to comprehensively explore the rich tapestry of parental marital relationships.

In a world marked by rapid transformations and shifting paradigms, our investigation takes on a new dimension of importance. Delving deep into the heart of how marital relationships ripple through the lives of children offers an illuminating lens through which to understand the complexities of their development. The profound impact of these relationships is a testament to the enduring legacy that parents bestow upon their progeny. Thus, the study of parental marital relationships is not merely a study of two individuals but an exploration of the very essence that molds and shapes the future of our society—the future represented by the children who will carry our legacy forward.

The significance of this inquiry is underscored by the accelerating pace of modern life, where influences abound, and challenges multiply. Children, like saplings, require a nurturing environment to flourish and grow. In this context, the exploration of parental marital relationships transcends the confines of academic discourse; it becomes an imperative for the well-being of future generations. A holistic understanding of how these relationships impact the intricate tapestry of children's lives will empower families, educators, and society to fortify the foundations of growth, ensuring that each child emerges as a beacon of potential, resilience, and positive change. By delving into the multifaceted repercussions of these relationships on crucial dimensions like children's social skills, academic accomplishments, and attitudes toward sexuality, we can gain a deeper understanding of how to cultivate stable and harmonious environments within families. This cultivation, in turn, fosters the solid growth of children along the paths of health and happiness. As society evolves, guiding the better development of the next generation becomes an essential aspect of family life. Amidst societal changes and evolving norms, embarking on a journey of understanding is paramount—how do parental marital relationships influence the social fabric woven by children, the knowledge they accumulate within the halls of education, and the attitudes they hold toward intimacy and relationships? This understanding not only becomes the compass navigating through changing winds, but also charts the course towards comprehensive development for our children and lays the foundation for the children's lifelong development.

## **2. The impact of parental marital relationships on children's multi-domain development outcomes**

### **2.1. Social Skills**

The quality of parental marital relationships directly influences the social development of children. Research indicates that frequent conflicts and unstable marital relationships within families may lead to emotional distress in children, resulting in feelings of low self-esteem and social difficulties. These negative emotions can hinder healthy interpersonal relationships and obstruct children from expressing themselves positively. Both domestic and international research have found that children who experience parental marital conflict are more likely to exhibit internalizing behavior problems such as anxiety and depression, which in turn lead to poor interpersonal relationships, including parent-child relationships, teacher-student relationships, and peer relationships, and will continue to exist in adulthood poorer relationships.

### **2.2. Cognition**

Poor marital relationships negatively affect children's cognitive development, including attention, memory and learning. The previous study found that when there is tension in the family due to marital conflicts, children may find it challenging to concentrate because their thoughts are preoccupied with family issues, thereby affecting their ability to focus on their studies. Also, emotional tension can lead to impaired memory in children. They may struggle to maintain concentrated attention in the classroom, resulting in missing out on crucial learning material and consequently leading to poor academic performance. In addition, family conflicts can diminish a child's interest and motivation to learn. They may lose their enthusiasm for academics and perceive studying as an unpleasant experience.

### **2.3. Emotion**

Poor marital relationships can also affect a child's emotional development. Children may become emotionally unstable due to parental marital conflicts. They may experience feelings of sadness, anxiety, anger, and other negative emotions, which can affect their emotional regulation abilities. In addition, family conflicts can lead children to feel neglected and helpless, subsequently lowering their self-esteem. They may begin to doubt their own abilities and question their self-worth. When conflicts

persist within the family, the overall atmosphere at home tends to become tense. This atmosphere can make it difficult for children to relax and deprive them of emotional support, ultimately affecting their emotional development.

#### **2.4. Behavior**

Children who experience parental marital conflict are more likely to exhibit internalized problem behaviors such as anxiety and depression, and are also more likely to exhibit aggression, disciplinary and other externalizing problem behaviors. Compared with externalizing problem behavior, parental marital conflict is more likely to lead to internalizing problem behaviors in children. Follow-up study found that parental marital conflict not only had immediate effects, leading to children exhibit more problem behaviors in the moment; also have long-term effects, resulting in more problematic behaviors after 5 years. Another study also supports this long-term effect, parental marital conflict experienced in kindergarten can significantly increase children's problem behavior in the future. Similarly, children 64 months previously experienced parental marital conflict significantly and positively predicted their 16-year-old problematic behavior.

#### **2.5. The academic consequences**

A poor marital relationship may lead to more worries for children, for example, children may worry that their parents will divorce, they will lose their parents' love and care, etc. These worries will make children unable to concentrate on their studies and lead to their test scores. decline. They may not be able to realize their full potential, thus affecting their future academic development. In addition, family conflicts can result in delays in the children's learning process, as they may require more time to adapt to the school environment and course materials. Over the long term, due to poor academic performance, children may face limitations in their future career choices. They may be unable to pursue their ideal career paths, which can impact their personal development.

Conversely, stable marital relationships provide children with a secure emotional support, enabling them to experience warmth and care within the family. This sense of emotional security helps nurture positive interpersonal skills in children, empowering them to confidently interact with others. The mutual respect and cooperation between parents not only form the cornerstone of harmonious families but also serve as positive social behavior models, equipping children to better adapt to diverse societal environments and collaborate with others with a positive attitude. Also, positive marital relationships provide children with emotional security and serves as a platform for demonstrating positive social behaviors and conflict resolution strategies. Children can perceive the stability and intimacy between parents within the family environment, fostering a sense of emotional security that empowers them to engage confidently with others. In the context of parents' stable marital relationship, children observe interactions between parents, thus learning crucial social skills such as cooperation, communication, and effective handling of differences.

The positive marital relationships help cultivate positive interpersonal skills in children and encourages them to express their emotions positively. They are more likely to learn sharing, cooperation, and respecting others, thereby establishing healthy friendships and intimate relationships. In a stable marital environment, children feel their emotions are respected and accepted, which helps them better articulate their feelings and needs. Moreover, positive marital relationships can contribute to boosting children's self-esteem. They receive affirmation and support within the family, leading to a positive self-perception and sense of self-worth. Children nurtured in a stable marital environment develop better adaptability. They learn to manage change, confront challenges, and confidently navigate diverse social situations. Additionally, witnessing positive conflict resolution between parents helps children learn effective problem-solving in their own interpersonal relationships.

In conclusion, parents' stable marital relationships provide children with a positive environment for social development, enhancing their social skills, emotional management abilities, and positive interpersonal relationships. These positive influences contribute to children building healthy and positive social connections as they grow.

## 2.6. Academic Performance

Parental marital relationships are closely linked to children's academic performance. A stable family environment contributes to fostering a positive learning atmosphere and providing favorable conditions for children's studies. Stable marital relationships often accompany emotional support among family members, encouraging children to develop healthy learning motivation and habits. The stability of the family environment can also reduce distractions and emotional issues that children might face during their studies, enabling them to concentrate better on their academics. On the other hand, unstable marital relationships may lead to an unstable family atmosphere, affecting children's learning conditions. Fluctuations in emotions and an unstable learning environment can hinder children from focusing, thus impacting their academic achievements.

Research indicates that parental marital conflict is a significant source of stress in the family environment for children. Marital conflict within the family can lead to emotional instability in children, making it difficult for them to concentrate. Studies have found a negative correlation between high levels of family conflict and students' academic performance [1]. Children may also experience feelings of frustration and helplessness due to conflicts between parents, leading to a decrease in their motivation to learn. One study revealed a negative association between family conflict and students' academic effort and interest. Parental marital conflict can contribute to an increase in emotional issues in children, such as anxiety and depression. These emotional problems can disrupt the learning process and impact academic performance. A substantial body of research indicates a negative correlation between marital conflicts within families and students' academic performance. Conflicts may lead to children becoming distracted, resulting in reduced study time and effectiveness. Simultaneously, marital conflicts might contribute to a tense family atmosphere, thereby affecting the learning environment for children. Family conflicts have been found to be negatively associated with students' completion of homework and utilization of learning resources. Under the influence of parental marital conflicts, children may exhibit fluctuations in their academic performance, characterized by unstable variations in their achievements. These fluctuations could be attributed to emotional and familial changes, impacting the children's learning process [2]

In summary, parental marital conflict may have a negative impact on children's academic performance, which could manifest in areas such as attention span, learning motivation, emotional issues, academic achievements, and learning environment [3]. These effects are influenced by the degree of family conflict and the individual characteristics of the children. An unstable family environment may lead to various academic challenges for students.

## 2.7. sexual behavior

When it comes to how parents' marital relationships can influence their children's sexual behavior, several key points need to be clarified.

Parents' marital relationships can shape their children's sexual beliefs and values. For example, a family that fosters respect for sexual health may teach their children to respect others' boundaries and consent, as well as emphasize the importance of healthy sexual relationships. Open and honest communication within the family helps children acquire accurate information about sexual health and behavior. If parents provide comprehensive sexual education, their children are more likely to make informed decisions and engage in safe sexual practices. Also, marital conflict and instability between parents can have negative consequences on their children's mental health [4]. Children may use sexual behavior as a coping mechanism for family issues or emotional distress, potentially leading to adverse sexual health outcomes. Parents serve as role models for their children's behavior. Their sexual behaviors and attitudes can influence how children navigate intimate relationships and engage in sexual activities. If parents exhibit a healthy and respectful relationship, their children are more likely to emulate that pattern. The marital relationship of parents can potentially influence the formation of their children's sexual knowledge and attitudes. A stable and open family environment might aid children in acquiring accurate sexual education information and cultivating positive and healthy sexual attitudes [5]. In addition, the quality of parents' marital relationship may be associated with

the timing of their children's onset of sexual behavior. Research indicates that a stable family atmosphere is linked to the delay of children's engagement in sexual behavior, while family conflicts might relate to early sexual maturity and marriage. Also, instability and conflict within the family environment could be correlated with sexual risk behavior in children [6]. Some studies have found that parental conflict and family instability might lead children to be more prone to engaging in sexual risk behaviors, such as unsafe sexual practices and frequent changes of sexual partners [7]. Additionally, the quality of the marital relationship of parents can impact the sexual mental health of their children. A stable family environment and harmonious parental relationships could contribute to fostering positive sexual mental health and self-image in children [8].

Based on the previous studies, it is obvious that parents' marital relationships play a significant role in shaping their children's sexual beliefs, values, and behaviors [9]. Open communication, a supportive environment, and healthy marital relationships can positively influence children's sexual health and choices, while marital conflict and instability may lead to adverse outcomes in this regard [10].

### 3. Conclusion

The family environment has a profound impact on children's development, especially the marital relationship of parents. Understanding these influences can help families, schools, and society take measures to provide a more favorable environment for children's healthy growth. In a stable family environment, parents' relationships often transmit positive values and attitudes, which have a positive impact on children's personal development. Conversely, in an unstable marital environment, children may face family turmoil and emotional distress, which can negatively affect their social skills, academic performance, and sexual behavior. However, it is important to note that every family is unique, and there are complex and diverse factors at play, so it is necessary to consider various factors comprehensively to support children's healthy development. Therefore, understanding the impact of parental marital relationships on children's development can enable families, schools, and society to implement appropriate intervention measures and provide a healthier and more stable growing environment for children.

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