

## FAMILY CONFLICT: ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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### **Abstract**

*Family, the cornerstone of human society, stands as both the most widespread and enduring institution, significantly molding the character of its members. This foundational unit serves as the primary social environment, where individuals first learn the fundamental principles of social interaction. Through family, we acquire the skills necessary to engage productively with society, ultimately learning how to survive and flourish. In contemporary society, the pressures of modern life, including demanding work schedules and the pursuit of higher education, often leave individuals with limited time for their families. However, it is imperative for families to prioritize time together, recognizing the irreplaceable value of familial bonds. This prioritization is essential for fostering strong relationships and ensuring the well-being of each member. This study, therefore, delves into the common conflicts that arise within families, aiming to understand the dynamics that contribute to these issues. By examining these conflicts, we seek to gain insights into the challenges families face and identify potential strategies for promoting healthier relationships and stronger family units.*

### **Keywords**

*Family, Institution, Society, Socialization, Conflict, Interaction, Resolution.*

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*“A happy family is but an earlier heaven.” – George Bernard Shaw*  
*“Everyone needs a house to live in, but a supportive family is what builds a home.” – Anthony Liccione*

## **Introduction**

Families offer a nurturing environment for individuals to live, grow, and develop. The values and traditions established by parents during a child’s upbringing shape the family culture. A healthy family thrives on strong morals, mutual loyalty, cooperation, and a united effort to minimize conflict. Open communication is vital, as it fosters understanding and reduces the likelihood of disagreements. While unresolved conflicts can breed hostility and distance, effectively managed conflicts can strengthen family bonds and reinforce relationships.

A family must establish a set of values and morals that the members should try to live by and abide by. It does not mean writing them down on paper and following them as if they are laws, but it simply means taking a practical approach to raising a family. The best way to ensure that these morals are followed by the children is by having the parents follow them as well. Children learn by modeling the authorities and in every family, the authorities are the parents. The parents are ultimately responsible for their children’s behavior because the children act accordingly to what they are taught and what they witness. If the parents set a bad example for behavior, chances are that the children justify any wrong behavior by arguing that’s how their parents act.

## **Family Conflict**

Family harmony provides a sense of belonging and a feeling of security unlike many other types of relationships. When conflict arises, it threatens that security. Whether the disharmony originates from within the family unit or from external sources, individual family members and the family as a whole can experience a range of negative emotions and consequences. Unresolved conflict may irreparably damage a marriage and the entire family if family members do not seek help.<sup>1</sup> Family conflicts frequently stem from divergent perspectives or misinterpretations among members. When disagreements remain unresolved, they can escalate into arguments and foster resentment. Families encounter a multitude of potential conflict sources, such as differing parenting approaches, the division of household chores, and financial matters. While occasional disagreements are a natural part of family life, ongoing conflict can place significant strain on relationships. Furthermore, some individuals may find it challenging to regulate their emotions, potentially resulting in hurtful or aggressive behaviors. Communicating in a positive way can

help reduce conflict so that family members can reach a peaceful resolution. This usually means that everyone agrees to a compromise or agrees to disagree.

Family is a source of great joy. But when conflict arises, family turmoil can lead to depression, anxiety, resentment and fear. A variety of issues can cause conflict between relatives, including extramarital affairs, poor communication and child-related hardships like infertility, disabilities or opposing parenting styles, which can damage relationships. Not having money for basic necessities like food, clothing, shelter, and medicine creates conflicts in the family. The harsh attitude of parents and excessive punishment of children can cause family conflicts. Relatives, neighbors, friends and in-laws can create misunderstandings between family members.

### **Conflict Resolution**

1. **“Be hard on the problem, not the people:** Change the nature of the fight and you will change the dynamic. Stop throwing stones in arguments. Using blame, shame, or guilt to get your spouse to do something will become less effective as your relationship ends, because each of you will stop making the little concessions you once made for each other in the relationship. Instead, address the problem rather than laying blame on your spouse.
2. **Bite your tongue:** Think before you respond. Those few seconds of tongue biting can save you a lot of trouble in the long run.
3. **Acknowledge:** Acknowledge your spouse’s feelings without being patronizing.

Be direct; don’t play games. Have your own priorities straight.

4. **Give the Benefit of the Doubt:** Before, during, and after your divorce, you’re going to have lots of opportunities to test your ability to give your spouse the benefit of the doubt. Any time you feel frustrated, annoyed, or mildly irritated, remember that your spouse is human and so are you. We all have our bad days. Also, one day you may be the one asking for the benefit of the doubt, and it helps to pay it forward.

Offering the benefit of the doubt helps you practice seeing the best in your spouse.”<sup>2</sup>

5. **“Always stand by your family:** It is obvious that you need to tackle some hard times with your family. It can be a financial problem, a physical or psychological problem of your loved ones, and so on. No matter how bad the situation is, stand by your family members. If your children have done something bad, tell them calmly why it is wrong instead of yelling at them. If any of your family members is facing some problems, give them physical, financial, and mental support to deal with the issues.”<sup>3</sup>

Most importantly, each family member should listen carefully to others. Calmly try to clarify the differences in the argument. Define the conflict and frame it. Once you understand the problem, you can solve the issues without becoming angry and destructive. Remember that, despite your differences, you love and respect each other. The viewpoints of everyone in the family are worth hearing and need to be acknowledged. Sometimes, one motivated family member can lead the charge in handling family conflict in order to resolve family arguments and help all parties move past the issues. “Strong families have open lines of communication – where all family members feel heard and respected. One of the best ways to strengthen your family is to increase your listening skills and those of other family members. Until we can hear each other, we cannot build strong relationships.”<sup>4</sup>

#### **Review of Literature:**

**1. B. Devi Prasad, Srilatha Juwa, Mahima Nayar (2020)** *The Contemporary Indian Family: Transitions and Diversity*. This book analyses the dynamics of the development of family structure in India over the past few decades. It captures the diversities and challenges of contemporary families and provides a culture and region-specific overview of how families adapt and change generationally. The book explores the paradigms of understanding family life in India through illustrations that trace patterns of family formations in the context of large-scale social, economic and media-driven changes. Besides discussing the ongoing debates on the sociology of family, the chapters in this volume also look at diverse families experiencing poverty, conflict and displacement and demystify families with members having a disability or non-normative sexual orientation.

**2. Lindsay C. Gibson (2015)** *Adult Children of Emotionally Immature Parents: How to Heal from Distant, Rejecting or Self-Involved Parents*. Unfortunately, many individuals grow up suffering the life-shaping adversities of having emotionally immature, neglectful parents. With wisdom and compassion, Lindsay C. Gibson enables readers to recognize and better understand these toxic relationships and to create novel, healthy paths of healing. This book provides guidance to adults for self-help in resolving anxiety, depression and relationship difficulties that result from having emotionally immature parents. It is a thorough and detailed description of immature parents, children’s experience of their parenting, and methods to resolve the resulting problems. This is an uplifting book that provides hope and superb coping strategies for those who find it difficult or impossible to bond with parents who lack empathy and sensitivity.

**3. Adele Faber (2012)** *Siblings Without Rivalry: How to Help Your Children Live Together So You Can Live Too*. The author discusses many parenting issues and

gives the positive parenting guidelines to parents to try at home. The author also mentions how the advice changed and helped the parents' struggles. The book advises the parents to treat their children with the respect and dignity they deserve/need, and appreciate them as an individual and both you and your kids will be far happier for it.

### **Objectives of the Study:**

The present paper is intended to accommodate the following objectives:

1. To examine the dynamics of family conflicts;
2. To explore and identify the factors responsible for the family conflicts;
3. To study the importance of family in the society;
4. To highlight the benefits and advantages of family harmony;
5. To suggest the key points for maintaining harmony in a family.

### **Research Methodology:**

The present study depends upon primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected through personal discussions with different scholars. The secondary data is gathered through different types of books and news stories. The previous research articles and essays have also been used for the collection of secondary data.

### **Limitations of the Study:**

The data used in this paper are mostly from secondary sources. There is a lack of data based on communication with a respective sample of individuals. In-depth structured, semi-structured one-on-one elite interviews have not been conducted in this study.

### **Conclusions and Suggestions:**

Most of the people struggle to maintain a harmonious family life due to inadequate communication. Common sources of family conflict include financial stress, misunderstandings, lack of trust, in-law disputes, and sibling conflicts over elderly care, a spouse's frequent absence, jealousy, insecurity, and infidelity. Effective communication is crucial for recognizing the emotional states of family members, understanding their dreams, desires, and expectations. Encouraging open and honest conversations allows family members to share freely. Actively engaging with children about their lives and interests, while practicing patient listening, is essential. Prioritizing family over other commitments, regardless of their perceived importance, is vital for fostering strong relationships. You have to put the happiness of your spouse and children before your own to have a joy-filled family life. Learn to compromise and start considering things from the perspective of your family. You

have to change your previous careless lifestyle and all bad habits that can affect your family. You have to understand that your partner is taking the same responsibilities for your welfare of you and your children. No family will be perfect until you focus on the relationship with your spouse. Be kind and gentle to your partner. Show her love, care and respect her decisions. Learn her favorite things and her desires. Parenting extends far beyond financial support, as the most precious gift you can offer your children and spouse is your time and presence. Dedicate specific moments for family interaction, such as regular game nights, outdoor adventures, or simply shared meals, to foster a sense of togetherness. Demonstrate your love through actions by assisting with household tasks, regardless of perfection, and by preparing meals, no matter how simple, to show your care. Cultivate open and honest communication, providing a secure environment where each family member can express their feelings without fear of judgment, thereby building trust and strengthening bonds. Being present during significant events, like school functions or achievements, allows for shared experiences and lasting memories, ultimately reinforcing the family unit. Remember, a strong family is a team, supporting each other through thick and thin, celebrating successes, and offering comfort in times of difficulty.

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