Parenting Through Conflict: Lived Experiences of Couples in High-Stress Family Systems

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A r t i c l e   I n f o

A B S T R A C T

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of couples parenting within high-stress, high-conflict family systems. A qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach was employed to investigate how couples navigate parenting amid ongoing relational conflict. Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 29 participants from Pakistan who were actively parenting in the context of sustained familial or interpersonal stress. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure relevance and diversity in marital duration, number of children, and socioeconomic background. Interviews were conducted until theoretical saturation was reached and were transcribed verbatim for analysis. Data were analyzed thematically using NVivo software, following a multi-stage coding process that included open coding, axial coding, and theme development. Thematic analysis revealed three overarching categories: Emotional Strain and Coping, Parenting Under Pressure, and Relational Shifts and Communication. Participants reported high levels of anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and self-blame, along with a mixture of adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies. Parenting roles were often disrupted by conflict, leading to inconsistency, irritability, and attempts at protective parenting. Couples also experienced relational distancing, communication breakdowns, and intermittent efforts at reconnection. Some participants engaged in spiritual practices or sought external mediation through community or religious figures to manage conflict. Despite high levels of strain, a number of parents maintained functional co-parenting practices centered on their children's well-being. Parenting in high-conflict family systems is marked by emotional distress, role ambiguity, and compromised communication, yet many couples exhibit resilience through culturally embedded coping strategies and intentional parenting efforts. These findings highlight the need for culturally sensitive interventions and support systems tailored to parents navigating chronic relational stress.
Keywords: *High-conflict families, parenting, emotional strain, co-parenting, qualitative research, family systems.*

1. Introduction

Parenting within the context of chronic family conflict presents a complex array of emotional, relational, and functional challenges for couples, often placing them at the intersection of personal distress and parenting responsibilities. In high-stress family systems, couples not only manage their interpersonal tensions but also navigate the implications of these tensions on their roles as caregivers. These systems are often characterized by heightened emotional volatility, unresolved disagreements, and competing expectations, which can collectively erode parental capacity, mutual understanding, and child well-being (Smyth & Moloney, 2019; Treloar, 2019). The lived experiences of couples in such environments remain an underexplored domain in family psychology and relational studies, despite emerging evidence of their far-reaching consequences for both partners and their children.

High-conflict environments have been linked to increased psychological strain, parental burnout, and diminished parenting efficacy (Kim et al., 2022; Liang, 2025). This dynamic is often exacerbated by work–family conflict, socioeconomic pressures, and divergent coping strategies between partners, creating a fragile foundation for co-parenting collaboration (Adams, 2024; Wang et al., 2023; Żak, 2022). The interplay between parenting demands and ongoing relational discord frequently leads to maladaptive communication patterns, emotional disengagement, and an increased risk of child emotional dysregulation (Dittmann et al., 2021; Tang, 2024). Research has shown that the effects of chronic parental conflict are not limited to the couple's relationship but extend into the parent–child dyad, influencing attachment quality, emotional regulation, and long-term developmental outcomes for children (Kim et al., 2022; Riahi & Izadi-Mazidi, 2024).

While co-parenting is widely recognized as a critical component of post-conflict adjustment, its implementation in the midst of unresolved relational distress is fraught with complexity (Anitta & Ramshida, 2024; Papp et al., 2020). The co-parenting dynamic becomes especially strained when individual psychological resources are depleted and when partners hold different philosophies on conflict resolution and childrearing. These difficulties are further amplified in dual-earner families and in households where caregiving demands are intensified by special circumstances, such as parenting a child with a disability or navigating post-separation arrangements (Carranza & Simpkins, 2023; Neijs et al., 2024). In such contexts,

emotional burnout and role ambiguity may reinforce patterns of detachment or reactive parenting, leaving children vulnerable to the emotional turbulence that characterizes these family systems (Liang, 2025; Ramadhani & Setiawan, 2020).

Parental conflict is not merely a behavioral issue but a deeply affective and systemic one. Emotional contagion, unresolved grievances, and the absence of mutual emotional support compound everyday parenting challenges (Ballantyne, 2021; O'Hara & Cohen, 2023). For example, affective spillover—the process by which emotional distress in the marital relationship influences parenting behavior—has been repeatedly identified as a central mechanism through which conflict undermines parental responsiveness and consistency (Wang et al., 2022; Wang, 2025). This phenomenon is particularly salient in high-stress family environments, where frequent disputes, emotional distancing, and hostile interactions often result in a diminished capacity for warmth, patience, and effective discipline. Studies suggest that even in intact families, elevated interparental tension predicts higher levels of coercive parenting, child anxiety, and reduced family cohesion (Cox, 2023; Zahedi et al., 2022).

In many cases, cultural scripts and gendered expectations further complicate the roles that parents play during periods of conflict. In patriarchal and collectivist societies, men and women may be socialized into rigid roles that shape how they respond to stress, how they parent, and how they manage interpersonal conflict. For instance, the cultural expectation that men remain emotionally stoic may hinder help-seeking and emotional expression, while women may internalize blame for relational breakdowns and attempt to overcompensate through intensified caregiving efforts (Accoe & Pennings, 2024; Garlick, 2021; McNamara, 2023). These gendered scripts often manifest in divergent coping strategies that can increase marital distance and interfere with cooperative parenting. Moreover, legal frameworks and social service infrastructures frequently fail to adequately support families undergoing relational strain, leaving parents to navigate conflict without sufficient resources (Accoe & Pennings, 2024; Casaleiro et al., 2023).

An added layer of complexity arises in families where children face mental health or developmental challenges. Research shows that such contexts often amplify parental stress and reduce relationship satisfaction, especially when adequate support systems are lacking (Neijs et al., 2024; Papp et al., 2020). Parents may experience guilt, helplessness, or mutual blame, which intensifies

interpersonal conflict and hinders effective parenting. In such cases, conflict is not only a result of relational breakdowns but also a response to chronic caregiving stress, emotional fatigue, and systemic inadequacies in social support. This reinforces a cycle in which stress begets conflict, and conflict, in turn, undermines parental capacity and emotional availability (Riahi & Izadi-Mazidi, 2024; Zahedi et al., 2022).

Furthermore, digital communication, work-from-home shifts, and blurred boundaries between professional and personal life have transformed the landscape of parental conflict. Remote work, while offering logistical benefits, often increases the proximity between conflicted partners and introduces new stressors into the domestic sphere (Boor et al., 2021; Żak, 2022). Social media and digital surveillance further compound relational mistrust and privacy concerns, as partners may become entangled in patterns of digital overmonitoring, online escapism, or passive aggression. These dynamics create new avenues for conflict expression and avoidance, ultimately shaping how partners interact and how they parent (Boor et al., 2021).

Notably, conflict does not always lead to negative outcomes. Some parents develop adaptive coping strategies and protective parenting practices that serve to buffer their children from the emotional fallout of marital discord (Adams, 2024; Ballantyne, 2021). These include conscious efforts to compartmentalize conflict, seek external mediation, and maintain emotional presence in the parent–child relationship. Yet even these strategies often occur in the absence of broader support systems and are limited by the extent of relational strain, psychological resilience, and contextual resources. A growing body of literature has called for the development of early, scalable, and culturally attuned interventions that can assist couples in navigating parenting amid conflict before relationships reach the point of crisis (Garlick, 2021; O'Hara & Cohen, 2023).

Despite increasing awareness of the impact of high-stress family environments, few studies have examined how couples themselves make sense of and respond to conflict while actively parenting. Much of the existing literature focuses on outcomes—such as child adjustment, post-separation arrangements, or legal disputes—without delving into the everyday emotional and relational experiences of parents who remain in conflicted unions (McNamara, 2023; Treloar, 2019). Understanding these lived experiences is essential not only for developing more nuanced theoretical models of family stress but also for designing interventions that resonate with the realities of families on the ground (Dittmann et al., 2021; Smyth & Moloney, 2019).

This study seeks to fill this gap by exploring the lived experiences of couples navigating parenting within high-conflict, high-stress family systems.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study adopted a qualitative research design to explore the lived experiences of couples navigating parenting within high-stress family systems. A phenomenological approach was employed to capture the depth and complexity of participants' experiences, allowing for a nuanced understanding of how conflict shapes parental roles, emotional responses, and family dynamics. The study sample consisted of 29 participants, all of whom were couples residing in Pakistan and actively parenting at least one child while experiencing ongoing familial or interpersonal stress. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure relevance to the research question, with maximum variation in terms of age, number of children, duration of marriage, and socio-economic background. Inclusion criteria required participants to self-identify as living within high-stress environments characterized by conflict, tension, or instability within the family system.

2.2. Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted in participants' preferred language to ensure comfort and authenticity in expression. An interview guide was developed based on existing literature and refined through preliminary interviews to ensure cultural sensitivity and relevance. Each interview lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes and was conducted in a private setting, either in-person or via secure virtual platforms, depending on participant preference and accessibility. All interviews were audio-recorded with informed consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim. The process of data collection continued until theoretical saturation was achieved—defined as the point at which no new themes or insights emerged from additional interviews. Ethical considerations, including voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw, were observed throughout the research process.

2.3.   Data Analysis

For data analysis, a thematic analysis approach was employed to identify patterns and meanings within the narratives. Transcripts were imported into NVivo software, which facilitated systematic coding and organization of the data. The analysis proceeded through several stages: initial open coding, development of axial codes, and the construction of core themes reflecting the shared and divergent experiences of participants. Throughout the process, constant comparison techniques were applied to refine emerging categories and ensure analytical rigor. To enhance the credibility of the findings, member checking was conducted with selected participants, and peer debriefing sessions were held with qualitative research experts. This analytical process aimed to illuminate the lived experiences of couples parenting under conflict, providing insights into coping strategies, emotional dynamics, and relational shifts within high-stress family systems.

3.   Findings and Results

The participants in this study consisted of 29 individuals (15 women and 14 men) from various regions of Pakistan, all of whom were currently parenting at least one child and reported ongoing familial or interpersonal conflict. The age of participants ranged from 28 to 47 years, with the majority falling within the 31–40 age group (n = 17). In terms of marital duration, 11 participants had been married for less than 10 years, while 18 had been married for more than a decade. Educational backgrounds varied, with 7 participants having completed secondary education, 15 holding undergraduate degrees, and 7 possessing postgraduate qualifications. The majority (n = 21) were from urban areas, while 8 resided in semi-urban or rural settings. Regarding employment, 18 participants were employed full-time (including both self-employment and salaried work), 6 were employed part-time, and 5 were homemakers. All participants reported living in high-stress family systems characterized by frequent conflict, emotional tension, or instability, which significantly influenced their parenting experiences.

Table 1

Category, Subcategory, and Concepts (Open Codes)

Category	Subcategory	Concepts (Open Codes)
Emotional Strain and Coping	Chronic Anxiety	Sleep disturbance, restlessness, hypervigilance, worry about children, fear of future, overwhelming thoughts, panic episodes
	Emotional Exhaustion	Feeling drained, loss of motivation, fatigue, emotional burnout, lack of joy, hopelessness, numbness
	Guilt and Self-Blame	Blaming self for conflict, regret over parenting choices, internalized shame, replaying arguments
	Adaptive Coping Mechanisms	Mindfulness, deep breathing, journaling, cognitive reframing, exercise, structured routines, nature walks
	Maladaptive Responses	Substance use, avoidance, emotional withdrawal, aggressive outbursts, excessive screen time
	Spiritual Coping	Praying, reading religious texts, visiting shrines, surrendering to fate, religious counseling
	Support Seeking	Talking to friends, seeking therapy, online support groups, family elders' advice, peer mentorship
Parenting Under Pressure	Disrupted Parenting Roles	Role reversal, parenting fatigue, shifting responsibilities, lack of parental presence, overcompensation
	Conflict Spillover into Parenting	Irritability affecting child interaction, harsh discipline, emotional unavailability, tension during playtime
	Protective Parenting Practices	Creating safe spaces, being emotionally present, active listening, reinforcing love, offering reassurance
	Parental Consistency Challenges	Inconsistent rules, parenting disagreements, unpredictability, lack of routine, emotional confusion
	Child Emotional Buffering	Trying to shield children, hiding arguments, comforting after conflict, redirecting emotional energy
Relational Shifts and Communication	Erosion of Intimacy	Emotional distancing, reduced affection, sexual disinterest, silent treatment, lack of empathy
	Communication Breakdown	Avoidance of sensitive topics, yelling instead of talking, passive aggression, unresolved arguments
	Co-parenting Dynamics	Negotiating parenting duties, silent co-parenting, teamwork despite tension, shared focus on children
	Conflict Escalation	Frequent arguments, cyclical blame, emotional volatility, reactive behaviors

Attempts at Reconnection	Date nights, family rituals, apology attempts, physical closeness, open conversations
External Mediation	Marriage counseling, intervention by elders, peer mediators, religious clerics, conflict coaching

Participants in this study described significant emotional and relational challenges as they navigated parenting in high-stress family systems. The thematic analysis revealed three main categories: Emotional Strain and Coping, Parenting Under Pressure, and Relational Shifts and Communication, each encompassing a range of subcategories that reflect the multifaceted experiences of couples in conflict. Below, the results are reported for each subcategory with supporting quotations.

Under the theme of Emotional Strain and Coping, participants frequently described experiencing chronic anxiety as a pervasive emotional state. Parents mentioned an ongoing sense of worry and mental restlessness, often linked to fears about their children's future and family stability. One father shared, "I lie awake every night thinking if my daughter will grow up in a broken home like I did." Another participant noted, "My body is tired, but my mind just won't stop. I'm always alert, like something bad will happen."

Emotional exhaustion emerged as another key subcategory, with many participants describing a sense of being drained, both physically and emotionally. Fatigue and loss of motivation were commonly expressed, especially among mothers juggling caregiving with relational tension. "Even small things feel heavy now," said one mother. "I try to smile for the kids, but inside I feel numb."

Participants also spoke of guilt and self-blame, often internalizing conflict and feeling responsible for its impact on their children. Several recounted painful reflections on past interactions. "I yelled at my son during an argument with my husband. I hate myself for that," a participant admitted. Another said, "I always wonder if I'm the reason things are falling apart."

Despite this emotional strain, some couples described adaptive coping mechanisms that helped them manage their stress. These included mindfulness practices, journaling, and structured routines. One participant shared, "I started going for early morning walks and writing down my thoughts. It helps me not lose myself completely."

However, not all coping strategies were constructive. Maladaptive responses such as emotional withdrawal, substance use, and irritability were reported by several participants. One father stated, "Sometimes I drink just to feel nothing. It's the only way to escape." Others mentioned escaping through excessive screen time or avoidance: "I just lock myself in the room and scroll on my phone so I don't have to deal with the chaos."

In contrast, several participants turned to spiritual coping to find solace and strength. They spoke of praying, reading religious texts, and surrendering their difficulties to a higher power. "At night, I just pray and cry. I feel like God is the only one who understands," one participant shared. Another said, "When I read the Quran, I feel some peace. It reminds me to be patient."

Finally, some participants engaged in support seeking by talking to trusted friends, joining online forums, or consulting family elders. Therapy was mentioned positively by a few, though not always accessible. One participant said, "My cousin went through something similar, so I talk to her often. It helps me not feel alone."

The theme Parenting Under Pressure revealed how conflict disrupted parenting roles and routines. Many couples described disrupted parenting roles, with blurred responsibilities and feelings of fatigue. One mother shared, "I have to be both the strict one and the gentle one. He's emotionally checked out." Fathers also noted struggles: "Sometimes I don't know what's expected of me anymore. She used to handle discipline, but now it's all on me."

Conflict spillover into parenting was another common experience. Parents reported being irritable or emotionally unavailable to their children due to unresolved tensions. "My son wanted to play, but I was still angry from the argument," said one father. "I snapped at him without reason."

At the same time, some participants described protective parenting practices, attempting to buffer their children from conflict. They engaged in emotional reassurance, intentional bonding, and presence. "No matter how bad it gets between us, I hug my kids and tell them it's not their fault," said one participant. "They should feel loved even if we're falling apart."

Despite good intentions, parental consistency challenges emerged, with many describing unpredictability in rules, routines, and discipline. "One day he says yes, the next day I say no. It confuses the children," a mother admitted. "We don't agree on anything anymore."

Some parents attempted child emotional buffering, such as hiding arguments or redirecting tension away from children. "We wait until the kids are asleep to talk," one participant said. "If we do fight, I go and sit with them afterward, so they don't feel scared."

The third major theme, Relational Shifts and Communication, illuminated how parenting in high-stress conditions affected the couple's relationship. Erosion of intimacy was a significant concern. Participants described reduced affection, sexual disinterest, and emotional distancing. One mother shared, "We sleep in the same room but feel miles apart." Another said, "I don't remember the last time he hugged me with love."

Communication breakdown was also frequently cited. Couples reported avoidance of sensitive topics, frequent arguments, and use of passive aggression. "We yell more than we talk," one participant noted. "Even silence feels like a war."

Still, some couples managed co-parenting dynamics by maintaining cooperation for the sake of their children, even amid emotional distance. "We may not talk about our issues, but we still discuss the kids," said one father. "They keep us connected, even if just for logistics."

Participants described conflict escalation as a pattern of recurring emotional volatility and reactive behaviors. One mother reflected, "It's like we're stuck in a loop. One word leads to a fight, and it never ends."

However, efforts toward attempts at reconnection were also present in several accounts. Couples described moments of closeness, such as family rituals or date nights. "Sometimes we sit with old photos and remember better times," one participant recalled. "It gives us hope, even if just briefly."

Finally, external mediation was a subcategory where couples described seeking help from marriage counselors, elders, or community mediators. "My uncle stepped in and helped us talk things through," a participant noted. Others mentioned religious figures guiding them through conflict resolution.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study explored the lived experiences of couples parenting in high-stress, high-conflict family systems through qualitative interviews with 29 participants in Pakistan. Thematic analysis revealed three central categories—Emotional Strain and Coping, Parenting Under Pressure, and Relational Shifts and Communication—each containing several subthemes that together illustrate how conflict infiltrates parental roles, emotional well-being, and relational functioning. The findings offer rich insights into how ongoing interpersonal discord affects the parenting

process and how couples respond emotionally and behaviorally within these strained dynamics.

The first major finding centered on the emotional strain parents experience while navigating persistent family conflict. Participants frequently reported chronic anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and internalized guilt about the impact of their conflict on their children. This aligns with prior research demonstrating that unresolved relational conflict significantly elevates psychological distress in parents, reducing their emotional availability and capacity for consistent caregiving (Kim et al., 2022; Liang, 2025). In particular, the cyclical nature of guilt and self-blame among participants echoed findings that parents often internalize responsibility for family dysfunction, which can lead to emotional suppression and psychological fatigue (Riahi & Izadi-Mazidi, 2024; Wang, 2025). Additionally, the dual presence of both adaptive (e.g., mindfulness, routine-building) and maladaptive (e.g., avoidance, aggression) coping mechanisms illustrates the variability in emotional resilience, reinforcing the importance of individual differences in parental responses to stress (Adams, 2024; Wang et al., 2022).

Participants' use of spiritual coping strategies—such as prayer, reading religious texts, and consulting religious figures—demonstrates the cultural specificity of emotional regulation practices. In collectivist societies where religion is deeply embedded in daily life, such forms of spiritual engagement serve not only as sources of solace but also as socially sanctioned mechanisms for endurance (Accoe & Pennings, 2024; Casaleiro et al., 2023). The reliance on social support networks such as extended family, peer mentors, and online communities also highlighted the collective orientation of help-seeking behavior, confirming previous research that found extended kinship and informal networks often supplement or replace formal mental health services in non-Western contexts (Garlick, 2021; O'Hara & Cohen, 2023).

The second major theme, Parenting Under Pressure, revealed how conflict disrupted traditional parenting roles and compromised consistency in caregiving. Role ambiguity, parenting fatigue, and conflicting disciplinary approaches were commonly reported. These findings echo prior literature showing that interparental conflict often spills over into parent–child interactions, impairing parental attunement, increasing irritability, and disrupting relational harmony with children (Tang, 2024; Wang et al., 2023). Notably, many participants in this study attempted to implement protective parenting practices, consciously

shielding their children from emotional fallout. This behavior supports the idea of "emotion work" in parenting, wherein parents consciously regulate their own emotional expressions to buffer their children, despite their internal distress (Ballantyne, 2021; Neijs et al., 2024).

However, despite these efforts, inconsistencies in discipline and emotional presence remained common, particularly in households where parents held divergent beliefs about childrearing or lacked communication about parenting decisions. This is consistent with earlier studies indicating that co-parenting quality tends to deteriorate under sustained conflict, with inconsistent parenting practices increasing the risk for child behavioral problems (Adams, 2024; Kim et al., 2022). Moreover, participants' descriptions of trying to comfort or emotionally "buffer" their children post-conflict reinforces previous findings that parents in high-conflict settings often attempt to make reparative gestures, though these are limited in efficacy when conflict is persistent and unresolved (Dittmann et al., 2021; Papp et al., 2020).

The third theme, Relational Shifts and Communication, revealed a clear erosion of intimacy and communicative functioning in the midst of ongoing conflict. Many participants reported emotional distancing, lack of physical affection, and frequent arguments that impeded both relational satisfaction and co-parenting efficiency. These findings are consistent with prior research demonstrating that sustained relational conflict diminishes marital satisfaction and hinders collaborative parenting (Smyth & Moloney, 2019; Treloar, 2019). Communication breakdowns were particularly salient in participant narratives, including avoidance of sensitive topics, frequent shouting, and passive-aggressive behaviors. These dynamics align with existing literature on negative communication cycles that characterize high-conflict relationships and reinforce emotional disconnection (McNamara, 2023; Ramadhani & Setiawan, 2020).

Interestingly, some participants reported maintaining functional co-parenting despite relational distress, showing that emotional disconnection does not necessarily equate to disengagement from shared parenting responsibilities. This supports studies that differentiate between the romantic and parental subsystems in families, indicating that while romantic dissolution may occur, the co-parenting relationship can persist with varying degrees of cooperation and mutual goal-setting (Anitta & Ramshida, 2024; Carranza & Simpkins, 2023). Participants who described "silent teamwork" and "negotiating without affection"

exemplify this dual-track relational strategy. Moreover, some couples attempted reconnection through rituals, date nights, or apologies, revealing intermittent efforts to repair relational ruptures even amidst persistent strain (Cox, 2023; Wang, 2025).

The use of external mediation—whether through marriage counseling, elder intervention, or religious clerics—was another significant subtheme. These findings echo recent calls in the literature for early and scalable interventions that are culturally embedded and accessible to diverse populations (Garlick, 2021; O'Hara & Cohen, 2023). In particular, the role of informal community supports in conflict resolution and emotional support highlights the need for culturally sensitive models of family intervention that move beyond Western-centric paradigms. The participants' trust in religious and community figures over mental health professionals reveals not only the gaps in psychological service accessibility but also cultural preferences for conflict resolution that respect family values and spiritual worldviews (Accoe & Pennings, 2024; Zahedi et al., 2022).

Taken together, the findings of this study support a systemic view of parenting within high-stress family systems—one in which emotional, relational, and sociocultural variables intersect to shape both the challenges and resilience strategies of parents. Emotional strain is not experienced in isolation but as a function of ongoing interpersonal tensions, gendered expectations, and social environments. Similarly, parental coping is informed not just by individual resilience but also by the availability of spiritual, relational, and community resources. These findings reaffirm the interdependence of emotional health, relational stability, and parental functioning and contribute to a more grounded understanding of how conflict-immersed parents navigate their dual roles as caregivers and partners.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample was limited to heterosexual couples residing in Pakistan, which may limit the generalizability of findings to other cultural contexts, family structures, or gender-diverse partnerships. Second, the self-reported nature of the interviews may be subject to social desirability bias, especially in relation to sensitive issues such as marital conflict, parenting practices, and emotional expression. Third, as this was a cross-sectional design, the study captures experiences at a single point in time and does not reflect how these dynamics may evolve. Lastly, while the study aimed for maximum variation, it did not include the perspectives of children or other family members, which might offer additional layers of insight into family dynamics.

Future research should consider exploring similar phenomena across diverse cultural and socioeconomic contexts to examine the universality or variability of conflict-related parenting experiences. Longitudinal designs would be particularly useful in tracing how emotional strain, coping strategies, and co-parenting dynamics change over time in high-conflict families. Additionally, incorporating the voices of children, extended family members, or therapists could offer a more systemic and multi-perspective understanding of the family system. Comparative studies between separated and non-separated high-conflict couples could also shed light on how relational status impacts parenting resilience and adjustment. Furthermore, future studies might focus on intervention efficacy by evaluating culturally tailored family support programs in reducing emotional strain and improving communication.

Practitioners working with high-conflict families should prioritize emotional safety, communication skills training, and the reinforcement of co-parenting goals in their interventions. Integrating culturally relevant spiritual or community-based resources may enhance therapeutic engagement and sustainability of outcomes. Family counseling should include psychoeducation about emotional spillover and encourage the development of individual and relational coping strategies. Where possible, creating spaces for joint reflection and collaborative problem-solving can help parents reestablish a sense of partnership, even amidst relational strain. Ultimately, early identification of relational distress and accessible, strengths-based support services are essential in promoting healthier parenting in conflict-laden environments.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

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Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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