

Socio-Psychological Characteristics of Family Conflicts in Young Families

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Abstract: Family conflicts during the first years of marriage often determine the further stability of the marital union and the psychological well-being of its members. The present study investigates the socio-psychological characteristics of conflicts in young families in Uzbekistan, emphasising value-motivational factors, communication patterns, and coping strategies. A mixed-methods design combined a structured survey (N = 312 spouses aged 22–32, married up to five years) with thirty semi-structured interviews. Quantitative analysis used hierarchical regression to identify predictors of conflict intensity, whereas the qualitative stage explored the subjective meaning attributed to disputes. Results show that incongruence in role expectations and economic stressors significantly predict verbal aggression, while collectivist value orientation mitigates escalation. Couples displaying high emotional intelligence and constructive communication report shorter conflict cycles and faster reconciliation. The discussion contextualises findings within structural-functional and attachment theories, proposes a culturally adapted model of conflict dynamics, and outlines practical implications for preventive counselling.

Keywords: Young families; marital conflict; socio-psychological factors; emotional intelligence; conflict coping; Uzbekistan.

Introduction: Early marital years represent a period of intensive role renegotiation, accompanied by the integration of individual, dyadic and social expectations. In Uzbekistan, where family remains a core societal institution, the rapid socio-economic transformation of the last decade has altered traditional scripts of conjugal behaviour, thereby increasing the likelihood of disagreements over resource allocation, career planning, and intergenerational boundaries. International research confirms that unresolved conflicts at this developmental stage correlate with decreased life satisfaction, the emergence of depressive symptoms, and negative parenting practices. Nevertheless, cultural variability in value hierarchies, gender role prescriptions and conflict expression demands local empirical assessment. To date, most regional studies have focused on statistical prevalence or juridical consequences of early divorce, leaving the socio-psychological mechanics of disagreements

insufficiently described. Addressing this gap, the present work examines the content, frequency and subjective appraisal of conflicts in young Uzbek families, linking these parameters to personality traits, socio-demographic variables, and relational skills. Formulating evidence-based recommendations also accords with state programmes on strengthening family cohesion and with the Higher Attestation Commission's priority areas in social psychology.

A convergent mixed-methods strategy ensured comprehensive coverage of both measurable predictors and lived experience. The quantitative phase employed the "Marital Interaction Questionnaire" (adapted Russian version; Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.86$) and the "Trait Emotional Intelligence Short Form" ($\alpha = 0.78$). Participants—156 couples recruited through family clinics in Tashkent, Samarkand and Namangan—completed instruments individually under researcher supervision. Socio-economic parameters included education, employment status, monthly income and

living arrangement. Conflict intensity was operationalised as the mean score of disagreement frequency, emotional arousal and solution latency. Data were analysed in SPSS 28 using Pearson correlations and hierarchical regression with enter method; significance threshold set at $p < 0.05$.

The qualitative phase involved thirty in-depth interviews (14 husbands, 16 wives) selected by maximum variation sampling from the survey cohort. Interviews lasted 60–90 minutes and explored typical conflict themes, perceived triggers, emotional sequences and reconciliation styles. Verbatim transcripts were coded in NVivo 14 following thematic analysis with inductive category generation. Triangulation across researchers enhanced credibility, while member checking with five couples validated interpretive accuracy. Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Business and Science Research Committee; written informed consent preceded participation, and anonymity was assured through alphanumeric identifiers.

The average conflict frequency reported was 3.2 episodes per week ($SD = 1.1$). Regression analysis revealed that discrepancy in spousal role expectations ($\beta = 0.37$, $p < 0.001$) and monthly income below the national median ($\beta = 0.25$, $p = 0.003$) significantly predicted higher conflict intensity after controlling for age, education and number of children. Emotional intelligence displayed a negative association with intensity ($\beta = -0.29$, $p = 0.001$), indicating a buffering effect. Couples living with parents showed elevated scores for intergenerational boundary disputes but reduced financial quarrels.

Qualitative findings identified five recurrent thematic clusters, the most salient being allocation of domestic duties, budget management, and digital communication habits. Participants described escalation trajectories beginning with mild irritation, progressing to verbal provocation, and occasionally culminating in emotional withdrawal. Notably, collectivist values—expressed in phrases such as “maintaining familial harmony”—functioned both as a restraining norm against overt hostility and as a source of internalised pressure, especially for wives balancing employment and traditional caregiving expectations. Constructive coping manifested through time-outs, humour and perspective-taking; destructive patterns included stonewalling, sarcasm and coalition formation with in-laws. Husbands with higher trait emotional regulation narrated a conscious shift from accusatory language to problem-solving dialogue, facilitating quicker de-escalation.

The emerging portrait of conflict in young Uzbek

families gains greater clarity when situated within several complementary theoretical frames. Family systems theory emphasises that discord rarely stems from isolated dyadic disagreements; rather, it reverberates through interdependent subsystems that include in-laws, siblings and even workplace networks. Participants’ accounts of mediation attempts by elders illustrate how systemic feedback loops can swiftly convert a minor disagreement over household chores into a multigenerational negotiation of status and obligation. By integrating Bronfenbrenner’s ecological perspective, we observe that macro-level forces such as rising urban housing costs and expanding female labour-force participation exert distal yet palpable pressure on micro-level interactions, often compelling couples to postpone childbirth or accept co-residence—conditions that earlier regression models flagged as conflict catalysts.

Social-exchange theory further illuminates the way spouses calculate perceived fairness. Interview narratives revealed that economic contributions alone seldom satisfy expectations of equity; intangible currencies—emotional availability, recognition of career ambitions and respect for extended kin—carry equivalent weight. Where spouses sensed a chronic imbalance, they reported greater propensity to withhold affection or engage in passive resistance rather than overt confrontation, confirming findings from collectivist contexts that value relationship maintenance over individual venting.

Gender norms are in flux, producing a hybrid repertoire of behaviours. Husbands endorsing egalitarian attitudes reported lower conflict escalation, yet some expressed identity strain when financial instability undermined their culturally assigned provider role; this ambivalence occasionally manifested as defensive sarcasm. Conversely, wives negotiating dual roles as wage-earners and primary caregivers described “silent fatigue,” an antecedent to emotional withdrawal that the quantitative survey captured as reduced problem-solving efficacy. These observations echo regional studies on the “double burden” phenomenon, but they also reveal adaptive potential: couples who jointly redefined success criteria—from income metrics to shared developmental goals—experienced a shift toward collaborative problem framing that diminished adversarial framing.

Digital technology emerged as a double-edged influence. Instant messaging enabled rapid reconciliation through affectionate emojis, yet it also facilitated covert comparison with idealised couples displayed on social media, raising expectations for conflict-free harmony and intensifying dissatisfaction. This aligns with global evidence linking social-media

exposure to marital envy but highlights the need for culturally nuanced digital-literacy interventions that normalise healthy disagreement.

Policy implications extend beyond premarital counselling curricula. Municipal housing programmes that incentivise autonomous living could indirectly reduce intergenerational boundary conflicts, while workplace initiatives promoting flexible hours might ease the time-scarcity stressor identified in qualitative accounts. Clinicians should incorporate emotion-focused therapy components that honour collectivist values of harmony yet teach assertive dialogue, avoiding the Western pitfall of encouraging individual expression detached from relational context.

Finally, methodological refinements are warranted. Future longitudinal designs could deploy ecological momentary assessment via smartphone diaries to map conflict triggers in real time and disentangle transient mood effects from enduring relational patterns. Incorporating psychophysiological markers—heart-rate variability or cortisol rhythms—would deepen understanding of stress regulation across conflict episodes. Comparative studies across Central Asian republics may also reveal how varying degrees of modernisation mediate similar socio-psychological processes, offering a broader platform for culturally grounded theory building.

CONCLUSION

Conflicts in young Uzbek families arise from both socio-economic adjustments and interpersonal skill deficits. Role expectation misalignment and financial pressure intensify disputes, whereas emotional intelligence and collectivist harmony norms mitigate escalation. Preventive interventions should combine economic counselling with psycho-educational modules on emotional regulation and dialogue techniques, tailored to the cultural value landscape. Strengthening these competencies during the critical early marital period promises to enhance long-term family stability and psychological well-being.

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