

The Impact of Interparental Conflict on Children's Adjustment: The Role of Children's Emotional and Cognitive Responses

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This study integrated the concepts of the emotional security hypothesis (Davies & Cummings, 1994) and the cognitive contextual framework (Grych & Fincham, 1990). Children's emotional and cognitive responses to interparental conflict were identified as mediators of the association between interparental conflict and children's adjustment. The model postulating discrete emotional-cognitive factors and the integrated model of emotional-security, self-blame, and perceived threat were examined. The purpose of this examination was to see whether there was a set of specific, unique mediators that can be applied to further clinical child intervention. 411 five-grade children, their parents and teachers participated in the study. The SEM results indicated that these models provide a good fit to the data. Two models had different implications for application. The association between interparental conflict and child adjustment was fully mediated by emotional-cognitive factors. The findings suggested that children had a variety of specific, unique emotional and cognitive responses to interparental conflict that place them at risk for internalizing and externalizing problems. The results of integrated model indicated that the integrated concepts of emotional-security, self-blame, and perceived threat partially mediated the relation between interparental conflict and child adjustment. The integrated concepts can't provide a complete account of the mechanism explaining associations between interparental conflict and child adjustment. This study demonstrated that the differentiation of children's emotional and cognitive responses into specific factors provided a useful framework for clinical child practitioners to understand how children's responses to interparental conflict place children at risk for internalizing and externalizing problems.

Keywords: *emotional security, internalizing behavior, interparental conflict, self-blame, threat*