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IMPACT OF PENDING DIVORCE PROCEEDINGS ON CHILD CARE AND CHILD WELL-BEING: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF HINDU FAMILIES IN NASHIK DISTRICT

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Keywords	Abstract
<i>Pending Divorce, Child Care, Child Well-Being, Psychological Stress, Social Adjustment, Educational Development, Economic Problems, Family Court, Hindu Women, Nashik District.</i>	Pending divorce proceedings have significant implications not only for spouses but also for the overall development and well-being of children. The prolonged nature of divorce litigation often creates emotional instability, financial hardship, and uncertainty within the family environment, adversely affecting children's psychological, social, educational, and economic development. The present study examines the child-care challenges arising from pending divorce cases among Hindu families, with special reference to Nashik District, Maharashtra. The study adopted a descriptive research design based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected from Hindu women with pending divorce cases using a structured interview schedule, while secondary data were obtained from books, research articles, government reports, and legal documents. The collected data were analyzed using frequency and percentage distributions. The findings reveal that children's emotional imbalance and psychological



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stress (42%) constitute the most serious challenge associated with pending divorce proceedings. Social adjustment problems (22.67%), decline in educational performance (18.33%), and inadequate health care (17%) were also reported as major concerns. Economic analysis indicates that increased family and litigation expenses (34.33%), inadequate financial planning (33.67%), advocate's fees (22.67%), and limited access to government financial assistance (9.33%) adversely affect child care and overall development. The study concludes that prolonged divorce litigation has multidimensional consequences for children's mental health, educational achievement, social adjustment, and access to essential resources. Strengthening family counselling services, child psychological support, financial assistance programmes, legal aid services, and speedy disposal of family court cases would significantly improve children's well-being during divorce proceedings.

1. Introduction

Marriage is regarded as one of the most important social institutions, providing emotional security, social stability, and economic support to individuals and families. In Indian society, marriage has traditionally been considered a sacred and lifelong relationship, particularly among Hindus, where it is viewed as a religious sacrament rather than merely a legal contract. However, rapid social transformation, urbanization, industrialization, increasing educational attainment, women's economic participation, and changing family values have contributed to a gradual increase in marital conflicts and divorce. Although divorce serves as a legal mechanism for resolving irreconcilable marital disputes, prolonged divorce proceedings often create complex social, psychological, and economic challenges that affect not only the spouses but also their children.

Children are among the most vulnerable members of families experiencing marital conflict and pending divorce litigation. The uncertainty surrounding prolonged legal proceedings, parental disputes, financial instability, and changes in family structure frequently disrupt children's emotional security and developmental environment. Unlike adults, children often lack the emotional maturity to understand parental conflict, making them more susceptible to anxiety, fear, depression, insecurity, and behavioural problems. Consequently, pending divorce proceedings may have long-lasting effects on children's psychological well-being, educational performance, social relationships, and overall quality of life. From a sociological perspective, the family is the primary institution responsible for the socialization, protection, and holistic development of children. Functionalist theorists argue that a stable family environment promotes emotional development, value transmission, and social integration. Conversely, prolonged family conflict weakens these functions, creating emotional stress and social instability for children. Conflict theorists further suggest that unequal power relations and persistent disputes within families generate insecurity and instability that directly affect children's



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development. Contemporary sociological studies also emphasize that children's well-being depends not only on parental relationships but also on the availability of social support, financial resources, and institutional assistance during periods of family disruption.

Pending divorce proceedings influence multiple dimensions of child development. Psychologically, children may experience emotional imbalance, loneliness, anxiety, low self-esteem, and fear of family separation. Continuous exposure to parental conflict often results in behavioural changes such as aggression, withdrawal, poor emotional regulation, and reduced confidence. Socially, children may face difficulties in establishing healthy relationships with peers, teachers, and extended family members. Feelings of social isolation, embarrassment, or stigma associated with parental divorce may reduce their participation in school and community activities. Educationally, emotional distress frequently affects concentration, classroom participation, academic achievement, and school attendance. Economic challenges arising from prolonged litigation further limit access to quality education, healthcare, nutrition, and extracurricular opportunities, thereby affecting children's overall development.

The legal process itself can intensify these challenges. Divorce litigation in India often extends over several years because of procedural delays, repeated hearings, child custody disputes, maintenance claims, and financial disagreements. Such delays increase legal expenses and place considerable financial pressure on families. In many cases, parents must allocate substantial resources to court proceedings and legal representation, leaving fewer financial resources available for children's education, healthcare, and day-to-day needs. The absence of timely legal resolution also prolongs uncertainty regarding custody arrangements and family stability, further affecting children's emotional well-being.

Previous research has consistently demonstrated that parental divorce and prolonged family conflict are associated with adverse developmental outcomes among children. Studies have reported increased psychological distress, behavioural problems, reduced academic performance, and social adjustment difficulties among children experiencing family disruption. However, much of the existing literature focuses primarily on the consequences of divorce after legal separation. Comparatively fewer studies have examined the specific effects of pending divorce proceedings, during which uncertainty, conflict, and legal complexities remain unresolved for extended periods. This gap is particularly evident in the Indian context, where cultural expectations, family structures, and judicial processes differ significantly from those in many Western societies.

Nashik District in Maharashtra provides an important setting for examining these issues because of its rapid urbanization, changing family structures, and increasing utilization of family court services. While modernization has expanded educational and employment opportunities, traditional social norms continue to influence family relationships, marital expectations, and attitudes towards divorce. Consequently, children living in families with pending divorce cases often experience both the



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pressures of prolonged legal disputes and the social stigma associated with marital dissolution. Understanding these experiences is essential for developing effective family welfare policies and child-centred interventions.

The present study, "Impact of Pending Divorce Proceedings on Child Care and Child Well-being: A Sociological Study of Hindu Families in Nashik District," investigates the psychological, social, educational, and economic challenges affecting children during prolonged divorce proceedings. The study specifically examines emotional stress, social adjustment, educational performance, healthcare concerns, financial constraints, and litigation-related economic burdens associated with child care. By analysing these dimensions, the research seeks to provide empirical evidence for strengthening child protection measures, improving counselling services, enhancing financial assistance programmes, and promoting timely judicial interventions. The findings are expected to contribute to the fields of sociology, family studies, child development, social work, and gender studies while providing practical recommendations for policymakers, family courts, legal professionals, educators, and child welfare agencies committed to safeguarding children's rights and promoting their holistic development during periods of family transition.

2. Review of Literature

The impact of divorce and prolonged marital conflict on children's psychological, social, educational, and economic well-being has received considerable attention in sociology, psychology, family studies, and social work. Existing literature consistently demonstrates that children are among the most vulnerable members of families experiencing divorce, particularly when legal proceedings remain unresolved for extended periods. The following review highlights significant national and international studies relevant to the present research.

Amato (2000) examined the consequences of divorce for adults and children and concluded that children of divorced parents are more likely to experience emotional distress, behavioural problems, poor academic performance, and difficulties in social adjustment than children living in intact families. The study emphasized that prolonged parental conflict has a greater negative impact on children's well-being than divorce itself.

Hetherington and Kelly (2002) investigated children's adjustment following parental divorce and reported that although many children gradually adapt to family changes, prolonged parental disputes and unresolved legal conflicts significantly increase anxiety, depression, and emotional insecurity. The authors stressed the importance of supportive parenting and stable family environments in promoting children's resilience.

Kelly (2007) reviewed research on child custody and family adjustment after divorce and observed that continuous parental conflict adversely affects children's emotional health, irrespective of custody



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arrangements. The study highlighted that children's developmental outcomes improve when parents cooperate and minimize conflict during and after divorce proceedings.

Lansford (2009) analysed the effects of family instability on child development and found that repeated family transitions, uncertainty, and prolonged legal disputes negatively influence children's psychological adjustment, educational attainment, and interpersonal relationships. The study suggested that early intervention and family counselling can reduce these adverse effects.

Emery (1999) argued that divorce is not a single legal event but a long-term family transition affecting children's emotional security and social development. The study emphasized that unresolved parental conflict and lengthy legal proceedings create chronic stress, which influences children's behavioural and cognitive development.

Kabeer (1999) explained that access to economic resources, institutional support, and decision-making opportunities are essential components of empowerment. Although the study primarily focused on women's empowerment, its findings are relevant to child welfare because economic insecurity among mothers directly affects children's education, healthcare, and nutritional status during divorce proceedings.

In the Indian context, Chakravarti (2003) discussed the influence of patriarchal family structures on women's social and economic position. The study observed that women experiencing marital disputes often face financial dependency and social discrimination, conditions that indirectly affect children's well-being by reducing household stability and access to essential resources.

The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) (2021) reported that children's health, nutrition, and educational outcomes are closely associated with household economic conditions, maternal education, and family stability. The survey highlighted that vulnerable families require greater institutional support to ensure children's holistic development.

The National Crime Records Bureau (2023) documented a steady increase in family disputes and matrimonial litigation in India, indicating the growing need for effective family counselling, legal aid, and child-centred welfare interventions. The report also emphasized the importance of strengthening institutional mechanisms for resolving family disputes in a timely manner.

The World Health Organization (2022) recognized family conflict as an important social determinant of children's mental health. The report recommended the integration of psychological counselling, community support, and family-based interventions to reduce emotional distress among children experiencing adverse family circumstances.

Collectively, the reviewed literature indicates that prolonged divorce proceedings have multidimensional consequences for children's development. Psychological stress, emotional insecurity, social isolation, academic decline, and financial hardship are repeatedly identified as



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major challenges. Most studies also emphasize the importance of family counselling, legal support, and institutional interventions in reducing these adverse effects.

However, despite extensive international research on divorce and child development, empirical studies specifically examining the effects of pending divorce proceedings on child care within the Indian socio-cultural context remain limited. Existing Indian research has largely concentrated on legal aspects of divorce, women's rights, and marital disputes, while comparatively little attention has been paid to children's experiences during prolonged litigation. Furthermore, there is a scarcity of sociological studies focusing on district-level evidence from Maharashtra, particularly Nashik District.

The present study addresses this gap by examining the psychological, social, educational, and economic challenges encountered in child care during pending divorce proceedings among Hindu families in Nashik District. By providing empirical evidence from a local sociological context, the study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on family sociology, child welfare, and gender studies and offers practical implications for family courts, policymakers, educators, social workers, and child protection agencies.

3. Research Objectives

The present study was undertaken with the following objectives:

- To examine the psychological, social, educational, and economic challenges affecting child care during pending divorce proceedings among Hindu families in Nashik District.
- To analyze the impact of prolonged divorce litigation on children's emotional well-being, social adjustment, educational performance, and access to essential resources.
- To suggest appropriate legal, social, and policy interventions for improving child care and promoting the overall well-being of children during pending divorce proceedings.

4. Research Methodology

The present study adopted a descriptive research design to examine the child-care challenges associated with pending divorce proceedings among Hindu families in Nashik District, Maharashtra. The descriptive approach was considered appropriate as it facilitated a systematic analysis of the psychological, social, educational, and economic problems experienced by children during prolonged divorce litigation.

The study was based on both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected from Hindu women with pending divorce cases using a structured interview schedule. The interview schedule included questions relating to children's emotional well-being, social adjustment, educational development, healthcare, and economic conditions during the divorce process. Secondary data were collected from books, peer-reviewed research articles, government reports,



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census publications, family law statutes, reports of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), publications of the National Commission for Women (NCW), and reports issued by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

The study area was Nashik District, Maharashtra, selected because of its increasing number of family court cases and changing socio-cultural environment. Respondents were selected through purposive sampling, ensuring that only Hindu women with pending divorce cases and dependent children were included in the study. The collected data were classified, coded, tabulated, and analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, including frequency distribution and percentage analysis. The findings are presented through tables and interpreted from a sociological perspective to understand the multidimensional impact of pending divorce proceedings on child care and child well-being.

The study followed accepted ethical research practices. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from all respondents, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process. The information collected was used exclusively for academic and research purposes.

5. Results and Discussion

Table 1. Psychological, Social, and Educational Challenges in Child Care During Pending Divorce Proceedings.

Sr. No.	Child Care Challenges	Frequency (%)	Rank
1	Emotional imbalance and psychological stress	42.00	I
2	Social adjustment problems	22.67	II
3	Decline in educational performance	18.33	III
4	Health-related problems	17.00	IV
Total		100.00	

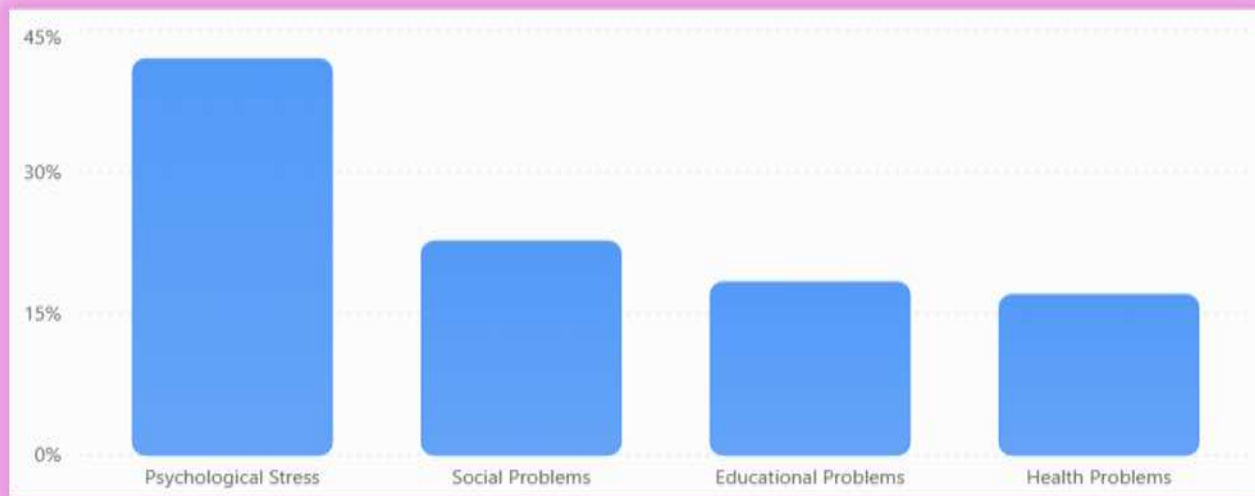
Source: Field Survey (2025)

Child Care Challenges During Pending Divorce Proceedings

Distribution of major psychological, social, educational, and health-related challenges reported by respondents.



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Interpretation

Table indicates that pending divorce proceedings have a significant adverse impact on children's overall development. The highest proportion of respondents (42%) reported that children experience emotional imbalance and psychological stress. Continuous parental conflict, uncertainty regarding family relationships, and prolonged court proceedings create feelings of insecurity, anxiety, fear, anger, and depression among children. These emotional disturbances often reduce children's self-esteem and affect their long-term psychological development.

The second major challenge is social adjustment problems (22.67%). Children living in families involved in prolonged divorce litigation frequently experience difficulty interacting with peers, teachers, relatives, and neighbours. Social isolation, behavioural changes, withdrawal, and aggression become common responses to prolonged family conflict.

Approximately 18.33% of respondents observed a decline in children's educational performance. Emotional distress reduces concentration, classroom participation, motivation, and academic achievement. Frequent court-related family disturbances and changes in living arrangements further interrupt children's educational continuity.

Although health-related problems (17%) were comparatively lower, they remain important. Financial difficulties, parental stress, and limited attention to children's healthcare may result in delayed medical treatment, poor nutrition, and reduced access to preventive healthcare services.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that prolonged divorce proceedings influence every aspect of children's well-being, with psychological problems emerging as the most severe consequence.



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Table 2. Economic Challenges in Child Care During Pending Divorce Proceedings.

Sr. No.	Economic Challenges	Frequency (%)	Rank
1	Increased family and litigation expenses	34.33	I
2	Lack of financial planning	33.67	II
3	Advocate's fees	22.67	III
4	Limited government financial assistance	9.33	IV
Total		100.00	

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Economic Challenges Affecting Child Care

Proportion of economic problems reported during pending divorce proceedings.



Interpretation

Table reveals that economic challenges significantly influence child care during pending divorce proceedings. The largest proportion of respondents (34.33%) reported that increased family and litigation expenses create serious financial pressure. Court fees, advocate charges, transportation expenses, and day-to-day household expenditure substantially reduce the financial resources available for children's education, nutrition, healthcare, and other developmental needs.

Nearly 33.67% of respondents indicated that poor financial planning further aggravated economic hardship. Irregular income, unexpected legal expenses, and limited financial management skills make it difficult for families to allocate adequate resources for child care.



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Approximately 22.67% identified advocate's fees as another major burden. Lengthy legal proceedings increase cumulative legal expenditure, forcing many families to compromise on children's educational and healthcare requirements.

Only 9.33% of respondents reported receiving or accessing government financial assistance, suggesting limited awareness or inadequate implementation of welfare programmes designed to support vulnerable families.

The findings indicate that financial insecurity resulting from prolonged divorce litigation directly affects children's overall development and quality of life.

Comparative Analysis of Child Care Challenges

Comparison of the highest reported psychological and economic challenges during pending divorce proceedings.



Discussion

The findings indicate that psychological stress is the most critical challenge affecting children during pending divorce proceedings, followed by financial hardship arising from prolonged litigation. These findings are consistent with the work of Amato (2000), who reported that persistent parental conflict has a stronger negative effect on children's emotional well-being than divorce itself. Similarly, Hetherington and Kelly (2002) found that prolonged marital disputes increase children's anxiety, emotional insecurity, and behavioural problems.

The observed decline in children's educational performance also supports the findings of Lansford (2009), who concluded that family instability and prolonged legal disputes negatively influence academic achievement and school adjustment. Emotional distress often reduces children's concentration, motivation, and educational aspirations.



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The economic findings correspond with Kabeer (1999), who emphasized that economic resources are fundamental for family welfare and children's development. Increased litigation expenses reduce household resources available for education, healthcare, and nutrition, thereby affecting children's overall quality of life.

The results further align with the World Health Organization (2022), which identified prolonged family conflict as a major social determinant of children's mental health. The WHO recommends family counselling, psychological support, and community-based interventions to reduce emotional distress among children affected by parental separation.

Overall, the study demonstrates that pending divorce proceedings have interrelated psychological, social, educational, and economic consequences for children. The findings underscore the need for child-centred interventions, including timely disposal of family court cases, family counselling services, school-based psychological support, financial assistance programmes, legal aid, and effective implementation of child welfare policies. Such measures would significantly improve children's well-being, educational continuity, and long-term social development.

6. Conclusion

The present study examined the impact of pending divorce proceedings on child care and child well-being among Hindu families in Nashik District. The findings reveal that prolonged divorce litigation has far-reaching psychological, social, educational, and economic consequences for children. Rather than being confined to legal disputes between spouses, pending divorce proceedings significantly influence children's emotional stability, academic performance, social adjustment, and access to essential resources required for their overall development.

The study identified emotional imbalance and psychological stress as the most serious child-care challenge. Continuous parental conflict, uncertainty regarding family relationships, and prolonged court proceedings create anxiety, insecurity, fear, and behavioural changes among children. Such emotional disturbances adversely affect children's self-confidence, interpersonal relationships, and overall mental health. These findings highlight the importance of recognizing children's emotional needs throughout the divorce process. The study also found that prolonged divorce proceedings negatively affect children's social and educational development. Many children experience difficulties in social interaction, reduced participation in school activities, and declining academic performance because of emotional distress and an unstable family environment. These findings suggest that the effects of divorce litigation extend beyond the family and influence children's long-term educational attainment and social integration.

Economic challenges further aggravate child-care problems. Increased family expenditure, litigation costs, advocate's fees, and inadequate financial planning reduce the resources available for children's education, healthcare, nutrition, and other developmental needs. Limited awareness and utilization of



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government welfare schemes further increase the financial burden on affected families, thereby compromising children's quality of life. From a sociological perspective, the study demonstrates that child well-being is closely associated with family stability, parental cooperation, economic security, and institutional support. The findings emphasize that prolonged legal proceedings should not be viewed solely as judicial matters but also as significant social issues requiring multidisciplinary intervention. Protecting children's interests during divorce proceedings demands coordinated efforts from family courts, legal aid authorities, educational institutions, mental health professionals, child welfare agencies, and government departments.

The study recommends strengthening family counselling services, child psychological support programmes, school-based counselling, parenting education, financial assistance schemes, and free legal aid services. In addition, family courts should promote child-sensitive judicial procedures, encourage mediation where appropriate, and ensure the speedy disposal of pending divorce cases to minimize the adverse effects of prolonged litigation on children. In conclusion, the study establishes that children are often the most affected yet least heard stakeholders in pending divorce proceedings. Ensuring their psychological well-being, educational continuity, social adjustment, and economic security should be a priority in family justice and social welfare policies. A holistic, child-centered approach involving legal, social, educational, and psychological support systems is essential to safeguard children's rights and promote their healthy development during periods of family transition.

AUTHOR(S) CONTRIBUTION

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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