

Parental conflict in the presence of children by the type of care in the Czech Republic

Sylva Höhne

Jana Paloncyová

A decorative graphic element consisting of a light orange line with four circular nodes. The line starts from the left edge, goes down to the first node, then up to the second, down to the third, and finally up to the fourth node which is at the top right.

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Theoretical framework

- Czech context:

- high divorce rate (40% of marriages end in divorce, 2024)
- more than half of divorcing couples have minor children (½ under 6 years old)
- every year, approximately 20,000 children experience parental divorce
- court statistics: the share of joint/share custody increased from 9% to 30% in the last ten years (mother's sole custody decreased from 83% to 62%); 79% of court decision based on parental agreement

- Literature review

- Joint custody – lower incidence of parental conflict, better cooperation (Weston & Qu, 2018; Bauserman, 2002, 2012; Augustijn, 2023)
- Intensive communication – potential parental conflict, stress on children (Amato & Rezac, 1994; Baude et al., 2019; Buscho, 2020; Ballnick, 2012)

- What applies to the Czech Republic? Hypothesis...

- Do the parents with almost equal custody manage to avoid disputes and conflicts in the presence of their children more than those with sole custody arrangements?
- Is the degree of conflict dependent not only on the type of custody, but also on gender and other characteristics, e.g. the child's age, the educational attainment of the parents or the time elapsed since separation?

Data – Child in Parental Conflict 2021

Quantitative questionnaire survey

- The research aimed at comparing post-divorce arrangements in two different types of child custody
- The type of custody **at the time of the research**: defined **by the number of nights the child actually spends with the respondent**
 - **sole custody arrangements**
 - **Resident parent** = child spends **22 or more nights per month**,
 - **Non-resident parent** = child spends **no more than 8 nights per month** or not at all, but still sees the child at least once per month
 - **more or less equal (joint) custody**
 - child spends **9 to 21 nights per month** with the respondent
- 1 059 respondents with the sole custody
- 940 respondents with joint custody (more or less equally)

Direct involvement of children in parental conflicts

(in the last three months)

Only families in which parents are in contact with each other; in %

	Very often	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
A parent argued with the other parent in front of the child (in person or on the phone)					
Sole custody	3.2	7.3	14.8	20.7	54.1
Equal custody	1.1	5.7	13.2	23.8	56.2
One of the parents did not want the child to have contact with the other					
Sole custody	2.7	6.3	10.0	10.4	70.6
Equal custody	1.5	4.3	8.0	10.7	75.3
One of the parents passed on information or messages to the other via the child					
Sole custody	3.5	7.3	18.2	23.6	47.3
Equal custody	2.3	8.4	20.8	25.2	43.3
One of the parents spoke negatively about the other in front of the child					
Sole custody	3.6	7.8	15.7	22.7	50.2
Equal custody	2.3	6.5	15.2	20.9	55.1
When in contact with the other parent, violence or threats were made between the parents in front of the child (in person or over the phone)					
Sole custody	2.7	5.4	8.9	9.6	73.4
Equal custody	0.8	3.6	7.2	8.6	79.9

Classification of the respondents into four classes based on the latent class analysis (LCA)

		Between parents in the presence of the child			
		1) almost <u>never</u> any conflicts	2) <u>occasional</u> arguments, passing on of messages and verbal abuse/condemnation	3) <u>occasional</u> occurrence of all the types of <u>conflict</u>	4) <u>frequent</u> occurrence of all the types of <u>conflict</u>
Sole custody	total	50.2	23.1	16.6	10.1
	women, resident	52.4	25.4	12.6	9.6
	men, resident	43.0	24.8	18.2	13.9
	men, non-resident	54.1	16.6	21.6	7.7
Joint custody	total	51.6	24.4	17.9	6.1
	women	55.9	22.1	16.3	5.6
	men	45.5	27.7	20.2	6.6

Conclusion

- More or less equal (joint) custody is not automatically associated with less conflict, nor sole custody with more conflict.
- Socio-demographic characteristics play a more significant role than the type of custody
 - Gender: Both resident fathers and fathers with joint custody declare more frequent conflict with the child's mother in the presence of the child.
 - Education: Higher parental education – less conflict, and vice versa
 - Preschool children (under 6 years) in sole custody may occasionally be exposed to the wide range of conflict situations between their parents more *than older children (16–18 years)*.
 - In joint custody children of school age (7–15 years) occasionally witness arguments and verbal abuse, and younger children (7–11 years) frequently experience violence between their parents *vs. younger (4–6 years) or older children (16–18 years)*.
 - The time that has elapsed since the separation was found to positively correlate with the calming of the relationship between the parents.
- Serious parental conflict in front of children is not a common phenomenon; however, in sole custody arrangement, 16% of parents have no contact at all.
 - Support for activities leading to the improvement of parental competences, mediation and parent education is still needed.

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Thank you for your attention!

sylva.hohne@rilsa.cz

jana.paloncyova@rilsa.cz

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Dítě v rodičovském konfliktu II. Rodičovství před a po rozchodu.
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Výzkumný institut práce a sociálních věcí, v. v. i.
Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs
Jeruzalémská 1283/9, 110 00 Praha 1
rilsa@rilsa.cz, T: +420 221 015 844
www.rilsa.cz