

Critique of the report A/HRC/53/36,
Custody, violence against women and violence against children:
Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and
consequences, Reem Alsalem

Critique by Rick Bradford (authorship may be changed if deployed with UN)

Part of the basis of complaint (detailed ref)

The report focusses on parental alienation and this is also the focus of this critique.

(A) The claim is made that,

“The report demonstrates how the discredited and unscientific pseudo-concept of parental alienation is used in family law proceedings by abusers as a tool to continue their abuse and coercion and to undermine and discredit allegations of domestic violence made by mothers who are trying to keep their children safe.”

This claim is the underpinning of everything else within the report, including its Recommendations. But the claim is false; the report has not demonstrated what is stated.

[1] That parental alienation is a “pseudo-concept” has not been demonstrated, and the claim is made in the teeth of a considerable body of evidence to the contrary by the simple expedient of ignoring the bulk of available evidence;

[2] The claim is made that allegations of parental alienation are raised by abusers as a ruse to discredit allegations against them or as a means of furthering their abuse. Whilst every form of bad behaviour will occur to some degree, the report has not demonstrated that such a causal relationship applies in the majority of cases. What very limited evidence is presented can equally be interpreted as allegations of abuse being raised to discredit, or as part of, their own alienating or abusive behaviours.

(B) The approach of the report is profoundly unscientific and follows no valid empirical methodology. A proper examination of whether parental alienation is, or is not, a valid phenomenon would require some form of meta-analysis starting with an exhaustive trawl of the peer reviewed literature. Instead, the report is essentially the author’s opinion, spuriously bolstered by referencing the opinions of carefully selected individuals of like mind.

[Appendix A](#) illustrates the extent of the literature which has been ignored by the report and which presents a very different perspective.

(C) Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the report, which is ostensibly addressing child abuse, is that it largely ignores the impact of parental alienation on the child. And yet, in the opinion of a large body of professionals and large swathes of the public, parental alienation is a serious form of child abuse. Instead, the author’s perspective revolves around *claims* of parental alienation being a weapon deployed by men against women in a sex war: the child disappears from the picture. But the child cannot be allowed to disappear from the picture in jurisdictions where the best interests of the child are paramount. The UN would need to be very certain indeed that the phenomenon of parental alienation were entirely false before endorsing this report because otherwise the UN would be tacitly condoning a serious form of child abuse. Such certainly is not available in view of the considerable body of informed opinion that parental alienation *is* a serious form of child abuse (see [Appendix A](#)).

- (D) In order to address parental alienation within the aegis of “violence against women”, the author presents parental alienation as a gendered phenomenon, i.e., that allegations of parental alienation are overwhelmingly made by men against women. But parental alienation is not a gendered phenomenon. Both men and women are alienated; both men and women are alienators. That, in a family court context, men may claim they are being alienated more frequently than women make such claims does not indicate a greater propensity by mothers to be alienators, but rather it reflects the massive asymmetry in which sex is likely to be the non-resident parent, namely fathers in over 90% of cases.
- (E) A glaring fallacy in the report’s perspective is that domestic abuse, or sexual abuse, is not distinguishable from parental alienation as regards symptomatology in the child. This is untrue. Parental alienation induces distinct behavioural symptoms in the child. Whilst a suitable professional would be required for a formal diagnosis of the condition, it is easy for even a lay person to understand the differences in symptoms (see [Appendix B](#)).
- (F) There will inevitably be scepticism that our complaint arises merely from a biased lobby. However, AI tools are now available to provide an independent response to key questions. This has been done in [Appendix C](#). The neutral machine-view is that the special rapporteur’s report is biased, that it fails to provide a balanced account based on the totality of available evidence, and that the central concept of parental alienation cannot safely be dismissed as invalid in view of the evidence that exists that it is real and damaging to children.

Conclusion

The UN should reject this report.

To accept this report would bring the UN into disrepute as tacitly condoning child abuse.