



DIVORCE AFFECTS CHILDREN

ABSTRACT

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Divorce is a major life stressor and is a lengthy process which often results in long-term emotional and psychological damage to children. The effects of divorce on children are explored in this review of the literature. Some studies indicate that the preschool aged population is the most vulnerable to divorce, whereas others insist that no age differences exist. Children of divorce were found to exhibit both internalizing problems, such as emotional difficulties like sadness, fear, and grief, and externalizing problems, such as aggression, lower educational achievement, and increased absenteeism. Divorce was also found to have gender-specific impacts. For boys, aggression was more common, and for girls, increased depression was more often reported. Additionally, divorce was found to have a profound impact on the parent-child relationship, possibly due to the lack of social support among family members. The impact of divorce for two-thirds of children was limited to two years, but numerous studies found a host of long-term effects, such as lesser educational attainment. The most crucial factor relating to the negative consequences of divorce is parental discord; family conflict was the most significant mediating variable in the effects of

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Divorce is one thing that no child hopes to experience from the parents. It leads to loss of the happy that the family has been with before. While family composition is a critical consideration in assessing the impact of divorce on children, we must also examine unique events, disruptions and transitions characterizing the divorce process that are not experienced by children. After divorce, there are significant changes in the family composition, parent-child interaction, discipline and social-economic circumstances. These events are accompanied by changes in extra family relations and social networks. Here we are going to discuss how divorce affects the children in both negative and slightly positive side.

Hence there are many ways that a child is affected once the family is divorced:

The child may lose emotional security by having a weakened relationship with his/her father since many divorced families a mother goes with the child hence the relationship between the father and the child is weakened. A study done in 1996 revealed that fewer than a half of children living with a divorced mother had seen their fathers at all in more than one year and only one in six saw their fathers once a week. Also, social and psychological well-being which includes the aspect of personal adjustment, self concept, interpersonal relationships, anti social behavior and cognitive functioning.

On the of the research conducted between 1970 and 1980, Cashion concludes that "evidence is overwhelming that after the initial trauma of divorce, the children are as emotionally well adjusted in these (female-headed) families as in two parent families." Investigations of a long term effects by (Acock and Kiecolt in 1988 and by Kulka and Weingarten in 1979) suggests that, when socioeconomic status is controlled, adolescents who have experienced a parental divorce or separation have only slightly lower levels of adult adjustment.

Again on the same security, the child may lose family traditions and routines which is caused by the change in residence of a child.

For instance in Kenya different communities have different traditions whereby if a father is from Kisii region for instance the child is a kisii and the is supposed to be aware of the Kisii traditions now if the mother is a Kikuyu and they divorce, the mother moves to the Kikuyu land which now means a child will be conversant with the Kikuyu tradition not the Kisii tradition of the father.

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Again the divorce of parents leads a child to have a decreased social and psychological maturation. For instance students in college whose parents were divorced were most likely experience verbal aggression and violence from there partner during conflict resolution. The child also have a lower scores on self concept and social relations and also research reveals that the children from divorced families experience also depression leading them to underscore in terms of education when they grow up

The child also be affected emotionally being hard to understand as to why they have to go between the two homes that's mother's home and father's home after divorce whereby they may be worried that if their parents stop loving one another someday, their parents will also stop loving them. Children also may think that they are the cause of the divorce may be they fear that they misbehaved in one way or the other. Teenagers becomes quite angry about divorce and the impact of it towards their emotional behavior. They may hence start blaming one parent for the dissolution of the marriage. They may also resent one or both parents for the upheaval in the family. This emotional changes leads to young teenagers mostly girls to lose the educational momentum and involve their selves in early sex because one parent may not be able to provide every essential that a lady needs hence leading to early pregnancies. When divorce happens, for instance the father was the only one working, means that the mother will go and stay at their home without any work. If the mother went with the kids, it becomes hard for her to provide for all the kids which also leads to young boys and girls be affected emotionally and decides to go to the streets and others like girls involve themselves in love matters hence after sometimes they become young mothers. This was lead by the divorce of their parents which left them with less parental support.

Generally research also reveals that children of divorced families are more likely to have socio-emotional, stress, depression and behavioral issues. These issues may impact children more acutely in the period around wen parental divorce occurs but also often continue to show up as the child grows. (According to the American Association for marriage and Family Therapy reveals that approximately 25% of children with divorced parents experience ongoing emotional and behavioral difficulties as compared to 10% of children whose parents are still together.)

Dr. Hill gives a clear definitional of emotional stress to a child of a divorced family whereby he says "The literature on a child separation and divorce can be frightening when you look at it as a parent. However, it is important to

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know that that doesn't have to be your child. The more you create a stable loving environment the more you can protect them from any negative impact."

While much of literature on divorce and children seems ideologically driven and biased towards emphasizing negative effects on children (Edwards, in 1987; Raschke and Raschke in 1979) the tendency of children in a single-parent families to display more androgynous behavior maybe interpreted as beneficial effect. Because of father absence, children in female-headed families are not pressured as strongly as their counterparts in two parent families to conform to traditional gender roles. variety of domestic responsibilities to compensate for the absent parent (Weiss, 1979), thereby broadening their skills and competencies and their definitions of gender-appropriate behavior. Divorced parents also must broaden their behavioral patterns to meet increased parenting responsibilities, thereby providing more androgynous role models. Kurdek and Siesky (1980a: 250) give the illustration that custodial mothers often "find themselves needing to acquire and demonstrate a greater degree of dominance, assertiveness, and independence while custodial fathers may find themselves in situations eliciting high degrees of warmth, nurturance, and tenderness." Aside from becoming more androgynous, adolescents living in single-parent families are characterized by greater maturity, feelings of efficacy, and an internal locus of control (Guidubaldi and Perry, 1985; Kalter, Alpern, Spence, and Plunkett, 1984; Wallerstein and Kelly, 1974; Weiss, 1979). For adolescent girls this maturity stems partly from the status and responsibilities they acquire in peer and confidant relationships with custodial mothers.(5)Finally, the relationship between family structure and personal adjustment (and other dimensions of well-being) must be viewed as reciprocal. The child's psychological state prior to changes in family structure is an important element in the child's ability to adjust to new situations and relationships. There is evidence (Kurdek et al., 1981) that children and adolescents with an internal locus of control and a high level of interpersonal reasoning adjust more easily to their parents' divorce and that children's divorce adjustment is related to their more global personal

Divorce becomes a great life lesson to children. It shows that not all relationships last forever and that staying in a relationship that is not working is not the only option .A family that quarrels and fights everyday is not a good

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show to children hence when on side for instance a mother decides to opt out, it becomes a great lesson to children that you won't be a failed marriage and a marriage that does lack peace. It also teaches children the importance of conflict resolution skills if the divorce they witness is dealt with amicably, maturely and with respect for all affected parties.

As this happens, for example dealing with an issue amicably without divorcing, we should remember that children always observe everything the parents do. Even though they might not say anything your actions have a marked impact on them. Divorce should not be seen as a marriage that has failed but rather a mature decision between two adults in search of fresh start. For instance every day we receive news of the couples who has killed one another because of marriage issues. Killing a mother or a father of your children is not a solution but rather you can opt in moving out to look for fresh life instead of taking one's life. I have a real example about the failed marriage and a mother decided to walk out. A father was a doctor in a certain hospital in Nairobi and a mother was a police officer in Kisumu. Every time that this two couples meet, there must be seen a fight because a husband was more into women because the wife was not around to monitor his everyday. One day a wife decided to go out of the marriage and left the husband to do what to her was his favorite game. Till now the mother is happy living alone with a kid. So sometimes when marriage fails, just get out and start fresh life.

Another positive impact is that both parents usually step up. Its often typical that in a marriage for one parent to be a little more hand on with the children than the other whether by helping in homework, going shopping, attending after school clubs or talking both parents tend to get more involved after a divorce. When this happens, children feels that their parents are taking a more vested interest in their lives, they feel happier and more confident in themselves for instant even if divorce has been done and a mother lives with the children and when a father takes control of providing for the kids without considering their differences as parents, gives children easy time to focus well without remembering that their parents are divorced. This is evident when a court in Kenya on January 27th 2023 ruled that marital property must be shared on the basis of fairness and not in accordance with an automatic fixed formula that imposes a 50 50 split.

Again children becomes for empathetic. The final positive effect of divorce on children is that it can help them become more empathetic by seeing their own parents divorce many children take their experience and apply them to other situations for example if they see one of their friends having a hard time it will often resonate more and

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as a result they are more likely to reach out and provide support where needed. Furthermore such children become more understanding and accepting of the difficult situations experienced by others.

As Joseph Campbell putted it in his quote “we must be willing to let go of the life we have planned, so as to have life that is waiting for us.

Divorce by one family may impact the children in many ways as we have seen and how the people around your children especially you and the other parents react to the divorce and provide comfort and support to your children through this time of divorce.

Lastly as C Joybell C said “there is no such thing as a ‘broken family’. Family is family and is not determined by marriage certificates, divorce papers, and adoption documents . Families are made in the heart. The only time that a family becomes null is when those ties in the heart are cut. If you cut those ties those people are not your family. If you make those ties, those people are your family. And if you hate those ties, those people will still be your family because whatever you hate will always be with you.

References;

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