



# DIVORCE AFFECTS CHILDREN

## ABSTRACT

Divorce is a major life stressor and is a lengthy process which often results in a long term emotional and psychological damage to children.

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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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Despite the differences that we see in various families, divorce has been the most stressful thing that happen. It diminishes the child's future competence in almost all areas of life. These also includes family relationship it affects the education of the child, emotional well-being of the child and the future that the child holds at hand. The research reveals that children of divorced families experience low levels of well being regardless of any achievement, conduct, development psychologically, self-esteem and even the relationship that a child has towards other children.

For instance two meta analysis whereby one was reported in 1991 and the other ten years later in 2001 showed that children with divorced parents continued to score significantly lower on measures of academic achievement, their conduct, psychological adjustment ,self-concept and social relations(Amato and Keith 1991 )

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

The child may lose emotional security whereby the child is being affected by having a weakened relationship with his/her father since the 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 reveled 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 , divorced fathers are seen as less caring by their age mates hence giving them insecurities in the society.

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 example in Kenya different communities have different traditions hence if a father is from Kisii for instance the child is a kisii and he/she is supposed to be aware of the kisii traditions now if the mother is a maasai and they divorce, the mother moves to the maasailand which now means a child will be conversant with the maasai tradition not the kisii tradition of the father.

Now here you can see clearly that divorce is an enemy to the child security that's why in most instances we have lose our traditions where divorce is a norm.

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

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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 when 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 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."

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We have been looking for negative ways on how divorce affects children. On the other and we are going to look at how it positively impacts the lives of the children of the divorced families. 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 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 it 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 everyday we receive news of the couples who have 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 these 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. It's often typical that in a marriage for one parent to be a little more hands-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 feel that their parents are taking a more vested interest in their lives, they feel happier and more confident in themselves for instance 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 27<sup>th</sup> 2023 ruled that marital property must be shared on the basis of fairness and not in accordance with

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an automatic fixed formula that imposes a 50 50 split the judgment was about the interpretation of many people that once divorce has been done a mother goes without anything since it is taken that she came to the home without anything. This decision gave hope to the children to enjoy their lives even after divorce because they have anything that they need as their upkeep.

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 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.

I believe that good co-parenting relationships between parents after separation can counter balance the negative impacts of divorce. I have seen this time and in my 20years working with divorcing families. I have seen this in our own families how the children are affected by the divorce. Divorce sometimes is not something to be happy with knowing the many negative impacts it has to the lives of the children. Many children have gone to the streets to try their luck there and others have even taken out their lives because of what the go through in a divorced marriage.

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.