

DIVORCE AND ITS IMPACT ON CHILDREN

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Introduction

A majority of the time, children are not involved in the decision-making process regarding the divorce of their parents. The demographics of the family structure have over the years significantly changed in the different households. The current belief highlights that children will likely adapt to new family settings and thus divorce will have if any few adverse consequences. Thus, the 21st-century family structure is characterized by single parents with few children living with their married, biological guardians (Anderson, 2014). As a result, researchers have based their study on the dynamic effects of divorce on children. In view of this, an analysis of themes such as cumulative stress, family structure, and social and psychological well-being will be vital in the comprehension of divorce and its impact on children.

Divorce and its impact on Children

Divorce is a common phenomenon in modern families which further led to significant changes within the family. The increase in divorce rates in the United States is the source of numerous adjustments with children bearing the greatest consequence of a disrupted family. According to Donahey (2018), children in the divorced household will likely face various challenges that will subsequently affect them in adulthood since it impacts the success of their relationships. Further, the high rates of divorce are an indication that before the age of sixteen, 40% of the children will have experienced marital dissolution (Donahey, 2018). Based on the American Psychological Association, a majority of the marriages in the United States occasionally end in dissolution as the probability increases in the second and other consequent marriages. Thus, the prevalence of divorce is a cause for concern since its impact will influence the decisions and behavior of future generations.

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The family is a unique entity that is characterized by diverse personalities, strengths, weaknesses and emotional temperaments before divorce. Regardless, marriage dissolution affects children future proficiency in all areas of their life. This is inclusive of their education, emotional stability, family associations and earning power (Hetherington et al, 1993). Parental conflict and divorce relay negative assumptions regarding marriage, relationships, and family which will manifest in the child's ability to create meaningful relationships in the future. The children will also lose emotional security that is linked to a stable family set-up. The loss of emotional security is associated with the lack of emotional support, and poor relationships with either the mother or father (Anderson, 2014).

Additionally, children who have been raised in a family where both biological parents are not available will demonstrate low levels of well-being. In comparison to those in nuclear homes, the children of divorced parents struggle to achieve a consistent balance in their lives due to poor adjustment of the current situation. The well-being of the children and generally the family will influence their overall health. As stated by Anderson (2014), the poor health of children in dissolved marriages is evident based on their learning disabilities and hyperactivity. Mental health problems will also be caused by the low levels of well-being due to the parents' lack of involvement in their lives after the divorce. Therefore, divorce is detrimental not only to the spouses but also the children who will likely undergo long term consequences especially without the involvement of the parents.

Research Methods

The article on *the impact of divorce and maternal employment on pre-adolescent children* highlights the differences in the operation of dissolved and stable families. The research question

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aimed to ascertain whether children in single-parent families grow up faster than others. Further, the research question also includes the role of maternal employment on the impact of divorce since the majority of divorced women have to work to provide for the family. In this case, data was collected through the use of two self-report techniques. The researcher used an adapted form of a questionnaire that analyzed children's activities and interaction with their peers as the mothers completed their questionnaire. Moreover, six- mother and child groups participated in the study as they represented the three family categories. The research was conducted on twenty divorced homes with working mothers, twenty intact households with an unemployed mother and twenty stable families with a working mother.

On the other hand, *the effects of divorce on children: differential impact of custody and visitation patterns* determines the children's experience regarding family reorganization after divorce. The study questions will include the family approach systems that affirm relationships among family members is not affected by divorce but rather just altered. Therefore, the focus on literature emphasizes the research questions that entail an analysis of divorce factors that affect the children and how the various patterns that facilitate the interactions of family members are influenced by changes due to divorce. The researchers used current available data with an emphasis on differences in age, conflict in the parental structure, and life dynamics after divorce as well as the custody or visitation plans.

The *impact of divorce on children* reviews data that ascertain the relationship between divorce, the children's' general health and family structure. According to the empirical evidence, the questions will highlight how the family organization influences the children's emotional stability, gender orientation, and antisocial tendencies. The study acquired its data from empirical findings that were both consistent and inconsistent.

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Impact of Divorce on Children

1. Cumulative Stress

The assumption based on the cumulative stress structure notes that the stress threshold can be achieved through a single stressful event or a series of less stressful events that have occurred within a short period. According to Lowery & Settle (1985), divorce is considered as a series of less stressful aspects that overtime exceeds the children's tolerance to stress. Divorce triggers several adverse effects such as economic challenges, parenting difficulties, and general dysfunction. Children in single-parent homes will be required to take over some of the household responsibilities. The effects of maternal employment in children vary based on their gender since girls are more negatively influenced by the mother's employment in comparison to the boys.

The roles of the children in the new family structure may be the cause of cumulative stress. This is because these children are required to grow and mature faster than their peers. Even though the increased responsibilities could have a positive influence on the children, these responsibilities would likely overwhelm them. Stress could also be due to fewer interactions with their friends and poor social involvement. As the added tasks increase self-reliance and independence, it also overburdens children which negatively impact their emotional well-being (Devall et al. 1986). Additionally, the mother might also rely on their children for both emotional and physical needs. Thus cumulative stress is the cause the issues frequently present among children such as sudden outburst of anger, truancy, and constant conflicts.

2. Family structure

Divorce generally has an impact on the family unit as it affects their traditions, culture and daily routines. As highlighted by Lowery & Settle (1985), family relationships should not be

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terminated due to divorce. This is crucial in instances whereby the husband and wife should co-parent and continue to raise the children. A dissolved family structure affects the children particularly due to custodial arrangements where the law determines the gender of custodial guardian and the form of custody which could either be joint, split or sole custody. Further, in a household whereby the mother is divorced and still working, the children would be required to assume certain duties and take part in the decision making process. Devall et al. (1986), states that single mothers who are occasionally working without any assistance will require the help of their children in the accomplishment of several tasks. This model will negatively impact children who have to mature faster as they take up more responsibilities in the home.

The family structure is vital in determining the effects of divorce on the children. Nonetheless, this model should also highlight the transitions, disruptions and other significant events that characterize the family structure. The changes in family composition are associated with discipline, parent-child relationships, children and parents emotional response to the divorce and socioeconomic issues. These factors are linked to the changes experienced within the social networks due to the alienation related to divorced spouses and the children (Demo & Acock, 1988). Thus the family structure is more than just the common set-up but also how children are affected by the societal stigma linked to divorce.

3. Social and Psychological Well-being

Children are usually a neglected group during the divorce process based on the assumption that they will easily adjust to the new family concept. In contrast, children's psychological and social well-being is due to the unresolved issues before, during and after divorce. For instance cumulative stress is associated with the presence of unresolved conflict,

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level of ambiguity and lack of preparation of the events before life resumes its normal pattern. Hence, psychological and social welfare entails factors related to interpersonal relationships, personal adjustments, antisocial interactions and cognitive reasoning (Demo & Acock, 1988).

The well-being of the children regarding divorce varies based on their genders. Boys will usually take more time to adjust in comparison to the girls in reaction to the marital dissolution. This will be evident by the high levels of aggression, disobedience, and dependency, with effects that will be prolonged for a long time. However, in the custody of their fathers, the boys were more mature and less demanding (Lowery & Settle, 1985). Thus, the poor adjustment to divorce was associated with the lack of contact with their fathers.

On the other hand, boys were positively influenced by maternal employment as compared to the girls. Based on Devall et al (1986), the girls' lack of enthusiasm could be due to the increase in household tasks after their mothers are employed. Therefore, the general social and psychosocial well-being of the children is a direct consequence of divorce that differs according to their genders.

Conclusion

In conclusion, divorce and its impact on children are inevitable in modern society due to the various issues experienced in the family. A majority of the households in the 21st century are characterized by single-parent households with few children living with their biological children. Children despite that they are neglected during the divorce process; they are greatly affected by their parent's separation. Thus, cumulative stress is associated with the added responsibilities given to children particularly in a single parent household. Furthermore, the disruption of the family structure affects the children's perception of relationships and their social and

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psychological well-being. Divorce is a great challenge in the society, and parental intervention will be critical in mitigating its impact on the children.

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