



# EFFECTS OF DIVORCE ON CHILDREN: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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## Abstract

Divorce can be a difficult time for a family. But in the last fifty years, there has been a rapid change in the mindset regarding marriage in Indian society. Proper upbringing of children requires love and affection from both the parents, but after divorce, the child is separated from one of the parents, and this separation breaks his tender mind from inside. Some children are not able to easily bear this distance between the parents and get depressed. A recent study has also revealed that children of divorced couples do not have proper social and mental development. They also lag behind other children in studies. How does parental separation affect children of different ages?

There is no denying that when things get tough day by day, it is better to part ways. But in those circumstances, the couple must think carefully about the mental state of their children. According to studies, divorce has a profound effect on the mind of a child and its effect can be on his mind and social relationships throughout his life.

**Keywords:** Marriage, Divorce, Affection, Love, Society, Children

## Introduction

When the psychological effects of divorce on children were first studied, the results looked clearly grim. In 1985. The paper, led by Mavis Hetherington (who became the foremost expert on the effects of divorce) found that children from divorced families suffered more negative life changes than their peers, and were more likely to have behavioral problems. Nowadays a child is not left to feel that they are taking up a shameful secret when their parents separate-the potential divorced parent or perceived 'ideal' of at least one or more of their friends. There is a different kind of family setup in comparison.

And over time, information has increased for parents who are facing divorce, meaning that divorce can be handled in ways that allow more resiliency to children. Indeed co-authored by Hetherington in 2002, which presented a more optimistic outcome for children of divorce, called 'Resilience and Vulnerability: Adaptation in the Context of Childhood Adversities'.

Generalizations aside, however, there hasn't really been a recent comprehensive psychological study showing how much the impact of divorce has changed. With divorce

moving into the realm of 'normality', research took off, and it has been over a decade since any large-scale studies were conducted.

The effects of divorce on children can be both emotional and psychological. Children may blame themselves for their parents' breakup and/or wish they would get back together. Children may think that if only they didn't behave badly in some way, their parents wouldn't be so angry with each other and would be happy and together. Of course, in reality, children are innocent victims in a divorce, as it is only about the parents and not the parent-child relationship, but the children may not understand it. This can confuse children as the parent-child relationship becomes a major focus in the time to come through and through the divorce; Parents tend to fight more over children and it can unreasonably make a child feel that he or she at least helped cause the separation between mom and dad.

Other issues of family dynamics that occur during a divorce, such as siblings who are split by "taking sides" with one parent over the other, can also occur. These effects of divorce on children can lead to a rivalry for parental affection, especially when children do not see the parent or parents as often because of moving out of the home. Parents who feel guilty about a divorce may resort to buying expensive children's toys.

This behavior may anger other parents who may not be able to do so or who may resent the money being spent this way or the children being spoiled. Such added stress can end up in an already stressful family situation that can make children feel even more as if the divorce was at least partly their fault. In this way, the effects of divorce on children can continue to grow throughout the process of parental separation.

### **When to get help for your child**

It is normal for children to struggle with their feelings and their behavior immediately after a parent's separation. But, if your child's mood issues or behavioral problems persist, seek professional help. Start by talking to your child's pediatrician. Discuss your concerns and ask if your child may need professional support. A referral to talk therapy or other supportive services may be recommended.

Individual therapy can help your child work through their feelings. Family therapy may also be recommended to address changes in family dynamics. Some communities also offer support groups for children. Support groups allow children in certain age groups to meet with other children who may experience similar changes in family structure.

### **Problems that can expand during divorce**

For a paltry minority of children, the psychological effects of divorce can be long lasting. Some studies have linked parental divorce to increased mental health problems, substance use issues, and psychiatric hospitalization during adulthood.

Several studies provide evidence that parental divorce may be linked to less success in young adulthood in terms of education, work, and romantic relationships. Adults who experience divorce in childhood have lower educational and vocational attainment and greater employment and economic problems.

Adults who experienced divorce during childhood may also face greater relationship difficulties. Divorce rates are higher for people whose parents were divorced. Parents play a major role in adjusting children to divorce.

### **Divorce-Related Stress**

Children who experience divorce typically lose daily contact with one parent, generally the father. Reduced contact has an impact on the parent-child link, and research shows that following divorce, many children feel less connected to their fathers. A child's connection with the custodial parent, who is typically a woman, is also impacted by divorce. Primary caregivers frequently report higher stress levels related to single parenting. The hardest element of parental separation may not be for all children. Instead, the stressors that come along with it are what make divorce the most challenging. The other stressors that make divorce challenging include moving, changing schools, living with a single parent who feels a little more stressed, and more. Financial difficulties are also frequent after divorce. Many families are forced to downsize or relocate, and they frequently have fewer material resources.

### **Reduce the psychological toll divorce takes on children:**

- **Co-parent peacefully.** Intense conflict between parents has been shown to increase children's distress. Removing hostility, such as yelling and threatening one another, has been linked to behavior problems in children. But even minor stress can add to the baby's distress. If you struggle to co-parent with your ex, seek professional help.
- **Don't put kids in the middle.** It's not fair to ask children to choose which parent they like best or to give them messages to pass on to other parents. Children who find themselves caught in the middle are more likely to experience depression and anxiety.
- **Maintain a healthy relationship with your child.** Positive communication, parental warmth, and lower levels of conflict can help children adjust to divorce better. A healthy parent-child relationship has been shown to help children develop higher self-esteem and better academic performance after divorce.
- **Use consistent discipline.** Establish age-appropriate rules and follow through with consequences if necessary. Studies show effective delinquency after divorce reduces divorce and improves academic performance.
- **Monitor teens closely.** The teen is less likely to display behavior problems after a divorce when the parents are doing what the teen is doing and with whom the teen spends their time. This means a less chance of using substances and fewer academic problems.
- **Empower your child.** Children who doubt their ability to cope with changes and who see themselves as helpless victims are more likely to experience mental health problems. Teach your child that although dealing with divorce is difficult, he has the mental strength to handle it.
- **Teach specific coping skills.** Active coping strategies, such as problem-solving skills and cognitive restructuring skills, better adapt to divorce. Teach your child to manage their thoughts, feelings and behaviors in a healthy way.

## Effects of Divorce on Children

- **Influence on mindset:** The effect of separation between parents is the most on their children and sometimes this effect is very destructive. Small children start feeling annoyed, angry and suspicious towards their parents, even a child who does not speak now, a fear also creeps in, the child would like to cling to his mother, keep touching her, follow her back, sleep clinging, By holding clothes, he will start doing things like gold which he did not do before.

Children from divorced families may face more externalizing problems, such as conduct disorder, delinquency, and impulsive behavior, than children from two-parent families. In addition to increasing behavior problems, children may also experience greater conflict with peers after a divorce.

- **Bad effect on health:** Divorce can also have an impact on your child's physical health. According to a study called The Proceedings of the National Academy of Science, physical health can have a bad effect on children's youth as well. According to the report, if there is a quarrel in the family in the beginning, then it has a very bad effect on the immune system of the children.

Divorce can increase the risk for mental health problems in children and teens. Regardless of age, gender and culture, studies show that children of divorced parents experience an increase in psychological problems.

Divorce can trigger an adjustment disorder in children that resolves within a few months. But, studies have also found depression and anxiety rates higher among children of divorced parents.

- **Poor Performance in Academics:** Everyone in the family finds divorce to be challenging. Children may become distracted and perplexed when trying to comprehend the shifting family dynamics. One of the repercussions of divorce on children could be evident in their academic achievement due to this disruption in their daily attention. Children who are more easily distracted are less likely to be able to concentrate on their schoolwork.

- **Loss of Interest in Social Activity:** According to research, divorce may also have a negative social impact on kids. Children whose families are divorcing could find it more difficult to connect with others and tend to have less social interactions. Children can experience insecurity and question if their family is the only one that has had a divorce.

- **Emotionally Sensitive:** A family going through a divorce may experience a range of various emotions, and the affected children are no different. This change may cause feelings of wrath, sadness, uncertainty, worry, and a host of other emotions. Children who experience divorce may experience emotional sensitivity and stress. Children may experience the effects of divorce through how they process their emotions, therefore they need a safe place to express their feelings. They also need someone to talk to and listen to them.

- **Feelings of Guilt:** Children frequently ask why their parents are divorcing. They will seek explanations, questioning whether their parents are no longer in love with one another or whether they are at fault. These guilt feelings are a fairly common consequence of divorce for kids, but they can also cause a lot of other problems. Guilt puts more strain

on the body, which can result in sadness, stress, and other health issues. These emotions of guilt can be lessened by providing context and counselling so that a child understands their part in a divorce.

- **Destructive Behavior:** While going through a divorce, unaddressed conflict can create unforeseen hazards in the future. According to research, children whose parents divorced during the previous 20 years were more likely to commit crimes, rebel by engaging in harmful conduct that threatens their health, or report having picked up smoking or prescription drug usage.
- **Loss of Faith in Marriage:** Finally, research has also revealed that, despite their hopes for having stable relationships of their own as adults, children who have experienced divorce are more likely to divorce when they are in their own partnerships. According to some studies, children from divorced households may have a two- to three-times higher tendency for divorce than children from families without divorce.

## Conclusion

Even while these are some potential outcomes of divorce for kids, they are in no way set in stone or absolutes. Families are becoming more and more aware of how difficult divorce is for both themselves and their children. Families are starting to seek assistance from supportive agencies like Family Means in order to divorce amicably. For the benefit of the parents as well as the children involved, we are assisting families through this transition more smoothly through our Collaborative Divorce programme.

Even though divorce is difficult for families, staying together just for the benefit of the children may not be the wisest course of action. Children may be more likely to experience behavioural problems and mental health problems if they grow up in families where there is a lot of fighting, antagonism, and discontentment. As a result, it's common for youngsters to struggle with their emotions and conduct as away after a parental separation. But if your child's behavioural or mood concerns continue, get expert assistance. Your child's feelings may be sorted out with individual counselling. To address modifications in family relationships, family therapy could also be suggested. Kids' support groups are also available in some places. Children in specific age groups can connect with others who might be going through similar family structure changes through support groups.

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