

IMPACT OF PARENTAL DIVORCE ON CHILDREN

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Abstract

Children seek care, support, and protection from their parents. Family is the first defense line for children. Parents are their role models. Children with parents who are not divorced experience a better life than children of divorce. Children of divorce suffer from emotional instability, lack of emotional support, financial issues, cognitive disadvantage, and health issues. The 21st century brings a complex family structure. It has an important role in divorce. This paper attempts to educate readers on the impact of divorce on children. This review paper presents children's life after their parents' divorce with special emphasis on specific problems that are common among children from families where parents are divorced.

Key words: Divorce, Children

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is an important and intimate relationship in life. It is the union between two people to fulfil two basic needs in life, that is love and life. Edward Westermark defined marriage as a relation of one or more men to one or more women which is recognized by customs or law and involves certain rights and duties both in case of parties entering into the union and in the case of children born of it. Two functions of marriage are:

1. Biological need of sexual gratification through a socially acceptable way, and
2. Helps people to achieve a higher level of personality maturation

In India, family is considered as the basic, cohesive, and integral unit of society. Family plays an important role in the life of an individual and mark its importance in different areas such as survival, education, health, and development. A healthy family is characterized by strong interpersonal relationship among its members. A healthy family helps an individual to lead a healthy life both physically and psychologically.

According to Indian view, marriage is a sacrament. For some cultures, it is a social contract. Marriage can be classified into several types and it varies from society to society. Types of marriages are:

IX International Conference on Multidisciplinary Research (IEI, Chandigarh) Institution of Engineers, India, Chandigarh



21st December 2019 www.conferenceworld.in

ISBN : 978-81-943584-6-6

Table – 1: Shows different types of marriages

Marriage						
Monogamy		Polygamy				
Serial monogamy	Non-serial monogamy	Polygyny		polyandry		Cenogamy/ Group marriage
		Sororal polygyny	Non-sororal polygyny	Fraternal polyandry	Non-fraternal polyandry	

Monogamy is a marriage between one man and one woman at a time. It is an ideal and rational type of marriage. Monogamy is classified into two, serial monogamy and non – serial monogamy. Serial monogamy represents the possibility of remarriage and it arises during divorce and death. In non – serial monogamy, the question of remarriage does not arise.

Polygamy is a form of marriage, where a man gets a chance to marry more than one woman or a woman to marry more than one man at a time. It has three divisions. Polygyny is the first sub type. In this, a man marries more than one woman at a time. Each woman has separate household and man or husband visits them in turn. It has two classifications and they are sororal polygyny and non – sororal polygyny. In sororal polygyny, a man marries the sisters of his wife at a time or after the death of his wife. In non – sororal polygyny, a man marries more than one woman at a time and they are not sisters to each other.

Polyandry is a form of marriage where a woman marries more than one man at a time. In fraternal polyandry, brothers share a common wife. In non – fraternal polyandry, woman marries more than one man at a time and they are not brothers to each other. In group marriage, a group of men marry a group of women at a time. Every woman is the wife of every man belonging to a group.

There are different types of marriage and we can find few common reasons why people get married:

1. People marry to love and to be loved,
2. People marry to protect and to be protected,
3. To give birth to children in socially acceptable way,
4. To avoid loneliness, and
5. To share responsibilities.

Every marriage face challenges. Sometimes people fail to solve their problems. If couple can't understand each other, it may lead to divorce. Divorce is the final termination of a marital relationship. Through divorce couples cancel their legal duties and responsibilities of marriage. In India, divorce is not a simple process and it

IX International Conference on Multidisciplinary Research (IEI, Chandigarh) Institution of Engineers, India, Chandigarh



21st December 2019 www.conferenceworld.in

ISBN : 978-81-943584-6-6

is a major social taboo. Divorce seekers have to undergo several legal procedures before they get divorced. In India, only five major reasons are considered by the legal system for divorce and they are adultery, desertion, cruelty, impotency, and chronic disease.

India has lowest divorce rate in world. Now, it increases due to several reasons such as changes in family structure, women empowerment, work pressure, house hold duties, child rearing, lack of adjustment, and financial issues. Usually, women seek divorce for unhappiness, lack of satisfaction, lack of care and support from husband, sexual issues, husband's alcohol, disagreement about child rearing, lack of independency, adjustment issues, and financial issues. Men seek divorce for reasons such as wife's independence, sexual issues, work pressure, financial issues, extra marital affairs, substance abuse, and over use of social media.

In this review paper, I would like to discuss about the impact of parent divorce on children. Children of divorced parents may suffer from issues such as academic problems, adjustment issues, anti social behaviour, and so on. Issues of children of divorced parents depend on three factors:

1. Relationship with both the parents before divorce,
2. Life with parents during conflict and duration of conflict between parents, and
3. Lack of parent's attention toward children after divorce.

If children have a secure relationship with their parents, they experience better health, well-being, use of coping mechanisms, and can adjust with changing circumstances. But children of divorced parents may suffer from several issues, such as;

1. Delayed adolescence,
2. Fear of marriage/family and parenting in future,
3. Adjustment issues,
4. Antisocial behaviour,
5. Psychological issues such as anxiety and depression,
6. Academic problems,
7. Health issues like weight gain
8. More likely to engage in risky behaviour, and
9. Behavioural problems

When parents divorce, children lost contact with one parent, completely. Sometimes children stay away from both the parents. Children may suffer from lack of attention, lack of care, lack of financial support, and lack of knowledge from parents. Children of divorced parents may experience certain stressors such as changing house, changing school, changes in peer groups, adjustment with new family members, and adjustment with stepparents.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this section, the details of the variable parent divorce and its impact on children is discussed. Review of literature will help one to understand the research problem and support the research topic.

A marriage is a union between a man and a woman. Through divorce, couples end their marital union. It affects the family as a whole, the couples, and the children.

It is a challenge for children when their parents decide to separate. It is very difficult to those children to be accepted by the society, like India. Sometimes children face more problems when they live with their stepfather or stepmother. Johnson, E.J (2012) conducted a study to analyze the impact of parent divorce on children. It was concluded that children of divorced parents are more likely to have academic problems, behavioural problems, psychological problems, and social problems than children with parents who are not divorced.

Anderson (2014) reported that children who live with their married parents have better physical, emotional, and academic well – being than children of divorced parents. He reported that child of divorced parents may experience following situations:

- Child may suffer from lack of emotional support from parents and may find less time with each parent,
- Child may experience financial issues,
- Child may create a negative image on family and marriage,
- Child may lose faith in religion and God,
- Child may suffer from health issues, and
- Child may suffer from stress and psychological issues such as anxiety and depression

Barron, L (2010) conducted a study to examine divorce and its impact on children. Children do not have any role in decision making when it comes to divorce. They have to face the consequences. The researcher has reported that children of divorce have higher rates of emotional instability, academic problems, social conflicts, and cognitive disadvantage than children of parents who are not divorced.

Williams – Owens (2017) reported that children face the loss of one parent's continuous presence when parents divorce. They also suffer from financial crisis. Children suffer from stress and may face its consequences. Here the researcher talks about the age of children and its role during divorce. Older children suffer when parents divorce than younger children.

Donahey (2018) conducted a study on children of divorced parents. It was concluded that high conflict parental relationship is linked to children's unsatisfied marriage relationship. Children may experience adjustment issues.

IX International Conference on Multidisciplinary Research

(IEI, Chandigarh) Institution of Engineers, India , Chandigarh



21st December 2019 www.conferenceworld.in

ISBN : 978-81-943584-6-6

Children of divorced parents may also suffer from health issues. Researchers from London School of Economics and Political Science conducted a study on 7574 children. They found that weight of children increase after their parents' divorce. After divorce of parents children who suffered from depression also suffered from weight gain.

Bernardi an Radl (2014) conducted a study to understand the long term consequences of parental divorce for children's educational attainment. They collected samples from 14 countries. The result showed that parental divorce created a negative impact on children's educational achievement. It is too strong when parents are highly educated.

Dr. Joan Kelly (2003) conducted many studies on children whose parents are divorced. It was found that children who experienced more marital problems between their parents reported more behavioural problems and depression during adulthood. From this brief review of literature we can see that marital relationship between parents have an important role in their child's development both physically and psychologically.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, without any doubt we can tell that divorce has a negative impact on children. Children of divorce have higher rated of anxiety, depression, and emotional instability, lack of care, financial issues, health issues, antisocial behaviour, adjustment issues, and cognitive disadvantage. Adults who experienced parental conflicts during their childhood have adjustment issues in their marriage.

India has lowest rank in divorce. But the number is increasing as family structure and life style change. 21st century is marked by a complex family structure. It is important for the people to know more about marital life and challenges it brings to life. Parents should know the importance of their relationship and how it influences their child. It is an important area for researchers to conduct studies and the result will help people to build a better family.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Apart from the efforts of me, the success of completing the work depends largely on the encouragement and guidelines of many others. I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the people who have been involved in the successful completion of this paper. I owe my deepest gratitude to Mr. Midhun Charls (husband), my parents, and parents of my husband.

IX International Conference on Multidisciplinary Research

(IEI, Chandigarh) Institution of Engineers, India , Chandigarh



21st December 2019 www.conferenceworld.in

ISBN : 978-81-943584-6-6

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