

Prevalence of problem behaviour among adolescents of divorce parents

Dr. Smritikana Mitra Ghosh

Ph.D from Ranchi University, Ranchi, Jharkhnad, India.

Abstract

In present study the researcher investigated the effect of parental divorce on behaviour problems among adolescents. Sample consisted of 80 subjects. Out of these 40 were adolescents of divorced parents and 40 were adolescents of non-divorced parents. Samples were selected on the basis of purposive random sampling method. Child Behaviour Check List developed by Achenbeck (2001) was administered on the adolescents. The data was analyzed statistically by employing mean, SD's and t-test. The study revealed there were significant differences between the adolescent of divorced parents and adolescents of non-divorced parents. Finding revealed that adolescents from divorced parents scored higher on behavior problems than adolescents of non-divorced parents.

Keywords: Behaviour Problems, Divorce Parents and Adolescents

1. Introduction

A family may influence a person's behaviour either negatively or positively both at childhood and adulthood. An intact family can be said to be a functioning union between a mother and a father, so when a break up exist, the turmoil may affect a child to a greater extent. A functioning family is beneficial to a child than a dysfunctional one. Family separation was a great contributor of child neglect which generally leads to child deviant behaviour.

1.1 Concept of Divorce

Separation is a legal agreement by which husband and wife choose not live together. Separation is the removal of children from the care-giver(s) to whom they are attached. Divorce is a common phenomenon which has attracted global attention. Divorce happens when a couple decides that they cannot continue living with each other anymore. Divorce is an intensely stressful experience for all children, regardless of age or developmental level; many children are inadequately prepared for the impending divorce by their parents. A study in 1980 found that less than 10% of children had support from adults other than relatives during the acute phase of the divorce. Divorce impacts the youngster's behaviour in the school environment, peer group and even in the society at large. The family structure is altered and thus affected. Many divorces are emotional and can even draw the children into the conflict between the parents. Adolescents facing problems of family dissolution have more difficult time with academic and social expectations at schools, among peers and the society than children from conflict free families. The emotional aspect of divorce which affects adolescents includes the feelings of anxiety, depression, inferiority complex, guilt and sometimes aggression. Parental interaction has a better effect on adolescents than the divorce. In other words, the negative outcome of divorce may increase pre-existing differences in the family unit prior to the divorce itself.

Divorce and its ensuing the well-being and subsequent development of children and adolescents. The consequences of divorce impact almost all aspects of a child's life, including the parent-child relationship, emotions and behavior, psychological development, and coping skills.

1.2 Concept of Behavioural Problems

It takes time for children to learn how to behave properly. With help and encouragement from parents and teachers, most of them will learn quickly. All children will sometimes disobey adults. Occasionally, a child will have a temper tantrum, or an outburst of aggressive or destructive behaviour, but this is nothing to worry about. Young children will tend to react to stressful situations with impaired physiological functions such as feeding and sleeping disturbances. Older children may exhibit relationship disturbances with friends and family, poor school performance, behavioural regression to an earlier developmental stage, development of specific psychological disorders such as phobia or psychosomatic illness. Behavioural problems can occur in children of all ages. Very often they start in early life. Toddlers and young children may refuse to do as they are asked by adults, in spite of being asked many times. They can be rude, swear and have tantrums. Hitting and kicking of other people is common. So is breaking or spoiling things that matter to others.

Risk factors for behaviour problems occur throughout children's development, and children face new risks as they mature and encounter new challenges. Children's environments also become more complex as they grow older, making intervention more difficult. Some early risks have been repeatedly tied to many behaviour.

2. Review of Literature

Farrington (2006) ^[5] and Storksen (2006) ^[15] reported that parental divorce may increase the incidence of depression among adolescents. Parental divorce is a stressful experience for adolescents at any age and most adolescent's exhibit emotional distress depression and behavioural problems. A new study has revealed that adult children of divorce are more likely to have seriously considered suicide than their peers from intact families (Thomas, 2011) ^[18]. Amato (1994) ^[1] studied mother and father relation to young adults and the result of this study indicated that a close relationship with the parents influences the young adults' happiness, life, satisfaction, distress and self-esteem. Relationship between divorced parents and their children continues to be characterized by low levels of contact, affection and

intergenerational exchange well after the children became adults. Children of divorced parents are disadvantaged in a variety of ways compared to children who grow up with both parents including being less likely to perform well in school, more likely to exhibit behavioral problems and more likely to have social and psychological difficulties (Hanson, 1999) [7]. It has been found that a high incidence of conflict in the co-parental relationship after divorce is one of the strongest detrimental influences on children’s adjustment to divorce (Madden-Derdich *et al.*, 1999) [12]. This may be caused, per Madden-Derdich *et al.* (1999) [12], by the historical view of divorce that is conceptualized as “a life event or crisis that occurs at a certain point with a finite beginning and end”; however, this view ignores the ongoing changes that occur throughout the relationships of the “broken” family members. A growing number of studies have also found that even among families that have never experienced divorce, conflict between parents has a negative impact on children’s psychological adjustment (Vandewater & Lansford 1998) [19]. Parental loss may adversely affect adjustment because it also involves change in the quality of resources available, and inter-parent conflict may negatively affect children because children may assume the blame for the conflict itself (Kurdek, 1993) [10]. A 2002 study by Sun and Li indicated that divorce had serious negative consequences on the psychological well-being of children both before and after the divorce and that these negative effects could not be attributed to the pre-divorce conditions within the family. Heatherington indicates that children of divorced parents had roughly double the divorce rate of those from stable families, due in part to "a lower commitment to marital permanence and fewer relationship skills (Gallagher, 2002) [6]. "Meta-analyses of studies conducted between 1950 and 1999 indicated that children from divorced homes function more poorly than children from continuously married parents across a variety of domains, including academic achievement, social relations and conduct problems (Winslow, 2004) [21]. Dawson's study found that children from disrupted marriages experience greater risk of injury, asthma, headaches, and speech defects than children from intact families. Her study also found that children living with formerly-married mothers were much more likely to have received professional help for emotional or behavioral problems in the preceding year than children living with both biological parents.

Wallerstein (1991), both in her own studies and in a review of similar studies, found that there were significant groups of children who, even six years after the breakup of their parents' marriage, were "impulsive, irritable and socially withdrawn" and tended to be "lonely, unhappy, anxious, and insecure." Suicide rates for children of divorce are much higher than for children from intact families (Susan & David, 1990) [17]. Death of a parent does not correlate with teen suicide, but family instability or disruption is one of the leading causes of suicide. Perceived rejection by a parent, not merely the loss of a parent,

8. Analysis and Interpretation of Data

is apparently the relevant factor (Nelson, et.al, 1988; Joha, et.al., 1977) [14, 8].

"No-Fault Divorce: Proposed Solutions to a National Tragedy," 1993 Journal of Legal Stud Upon surveying 752 families at random, the researchers divided the children into those who had never attempted suicide and those who had done so at least once. The two groups, the found, differed little in age, family income, race, and religion. But those who attempted suicide were more likely to live in non-intact family settings than were the nonattempters. More than half of the attempters lived in households with no more than one biological parent, whereas only about a third of the nonattempters lived in such a setting (Carmen, 1988) [2]."

Wallerstein *et al.*, (2000) [20] found that the normal adolescent developmental move toward individuation is threatened by divorce. Instead of being able to move toward independence and separation from parents, adolescents perceive parents as having separated from them. The adults are often consumed with their own problems during this turbulent time and adolescents may be neglected. Many adolescents feel their time for growing up is shortened by the divorce.

3. Hypothesis

Adolescents of divorced parents will show more behavioural problems than adolescents of non- divorced parents.

4. Method

Sample

The participants were 40 adolescents from divorced parents and 40 adolescents from Non – divorced parents between the ages of 16 – 18 years. The adolescents were selected from different school of Ranchi town.

5. Instrument

Achenbach Child Behavior Check List (CBCL): This scale was developed by Achenback (1983). it consist of 9 scales such as anxiety/ depression, withdrawn/ depression, somatic complaints, social problems, thought problems, attention problems, rule-breaking behaviour, aggressive behavior and other problems.

6. Statistical Procedure

The following statistical techniques were used for analysis of data.

1. Mean, Standard Deviation and t-ratio
2. Use of graph

7. Procedure

The Achenbach Child Behavior Check List (CBCL) was administered to adolescents of divorced and non-divorced parents. After the collection of data, the response sheets were scored individually. In order to fulfill the hypothesis of the study the score obtained were analysed with Means, SD’s and ‘t’ values. The result is presented in Table-1.

Table 1: Comparison of Behaviour Problems scores between adolescents of divorced and non – divorced parents.

Groups	N	Means	SDs	t	P value
Adolescents of Divorced Parents	40	46.1	5.68	9.89	0.01
Adolescents of Non - Divorced Parents	40	32.35	6.78		

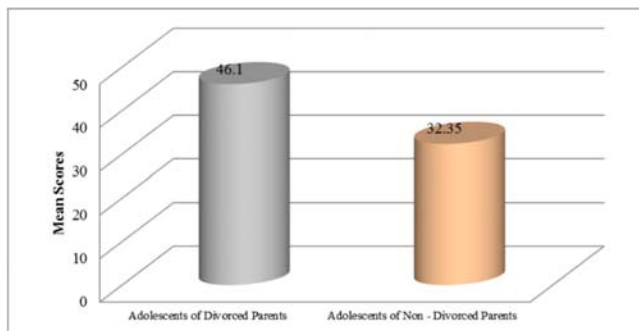


Fig 1: Mean scores of Behaviour Problems among adolescents of divorced and non – divorced parents.

The result indicated a significant influence of parental divorce on adolescent's behavioural problem. The two groups (adolescents from divorced parents and non-divorced parents) differ significantly on their scores on Child Behavior Check List. This finding confirmed the earlier findings of (Malone et al., 2004; Demuth & Brown, 2004; & Lansford et al, 2006) [13, 4, 11].

9. Conclusion

Adolescents of divorced parents reported higher incidence of behavior problems than adolescents of non – divorced parents.

10. Suggestions for Further Studies

- In the present study only two independent variables have been taken, it would be desirable to take up more variables.
- The study may be replicated on a larger sample in order to get a better understanding of variables under study.

11. References

1. Amato PR. Father – child relations; Mother – child relations; and offspring psychological well- being in early adulthood. *J Marriage Fam.* 1994; 56:1031-1042.
2. Carmen Noevi Velez, Patricia Cohen. Suicidal Behavior and Ideation in a Community Sample of Children: Maternal and Youth Reports. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.* 1988; 273:349-356.
3. Dawson DA. Family structure and children's health and well-being: data from the national health interview survey on child health. *Journal of Marriage and the Family.* 1993; 53:573-579.
4. Demuth S, Brown SL. Family structure, family processes and adolescent delinquency: The significance of parental absence versus parental gender. *Journal of research in crime and delinquency.* 2004; 41(1):58-81.
5. Farrington J. Gone. *Current Health.* 2006; 2,33(1):26-29.
6. Gallagher M. Third Thoughts on Divorce. *National Review.* 2002; 54:5, 50. Academic ASAP.
7. Hanson, Thomas L. Does Parental Conflict Explain Why Divorce is Negatively Associated with Child Welfare? *Social Forces* 1999; 77(4):1283-1316.
8. John S Wardarski, Pamela Harris. Adolescent Suicide: A Review of the Influences and Means for Prevention. *Social Work.* 1977; 32(6):477-484.
9. Judith W. The Long-Term Effects of Divorce on Children: A Review. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.* 1991, 352.
10. Kurdek, Lawrence A. Issues in Purposing a General Model of the Effects of Divorce on Children. *Journal of Marriage and the Family.* 1993; 55(1):39-41.
11. Lansford JE, Malone PS, Castellino DR, Dodge KA, Pettit GS, Bates JE. Trajectories of internalizing, externalizing, and grades for children who have and have not experienced their parents' divorce, 2006.
12. Madden-Derdich, Debra A. Leonard, Stacie A. Christopher, Scott F. Boundary Ambiguity and Coparental Conflict after Divorce: An Empirical Test of a Family Systems Model of the Divorce Process. *Journal of Marriage and the Family.* 1999; 61(3):588-598.
13. Malone PS, Lansford JE, Castellino DR, Berlin LJ, Dodge KA, Bates JE *et al.* Divorce and child behavior problems: Applying latent change score models to life event data. *Structural Equation Modeling.* 2004; 11:401-423.
14. Nelson, Farberow, Litman. Youth Suicide in California: A Comparative Study of Perceived Causes and Interventions, *Comm. Mental Health J.* 1988, 31-42.
15. Storksén I, Roysamb E, Moum T, Tambs K. Adolescent adjustment and wellbeing: Effects of parental divorce and distress. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology.* 2006.
16. Sun Y, Li Y. Children's Well-Being During Parents' Marital Disruption Process: A Pooled Time-Series Analysis. *Journal of Marriage & Family.* 2002; 64(2)472-482.
17. Susan L, David L. Divorce: A Hazard to Your Health? *Physician,* 1990, 16.
18. Tanya Thomas. Suicidal thoughts occur more often to children of divorced parents. *Journal of Psychiatric Research.* 2011.
19. Vandewater, Elizabeth A, Lansford Jennifer E. Influences of Family Structure and Parental Conflict on Children's Well-Being. *Family Relations: The Family as a Context for Health and Well-Being.* 1998; 47(4):323-330.
20. Wallerstein JS, Lewis J, Blakeslee S. The unexpected legacy of divorce: A 25 year landmark study. New York: Hyperion, 2000.
21. Winslow E. Preventive Interventions for Children of Divorce. *Psychiatric Times,* 2004; 1:45. Academic ASAP.