



Teenagers in Turmoil: Behavioral and Personality Shifts Post-Parental Divorce

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ABSTRACT

Educators, psychologists and policymakers, have found that teenagers are most likely affected by parental separation. This research investigates the psychosocial issues and emotional distress that adolescents face when their parents are getting divorced. The study also gathers perceptions from teachers who have been in these teenagers' lives for a long period of time. This study uses a qualitative approach using interviews. A total of 5 teachers from various schools across Bangalore were interviewed to gain insights from their experiences with teenagers. Most teachers revealed psychological disturbance, lack of confidence and isolation from peers. The aforesaid teenagers have displayed low motivation levels and fluctuating concentration and focus on academics. The teachers have pointed out that counselling given in schools and with the support of their teachers and peers, the teens could bring about positive changes in their overall behavior and cognitive development. The study lays great importance to the joint effort put in by schools, families and communities to help the teenager navigate this difficult period of their parental separation. The study contributes to the current body of knowledge by highlighting teachers' unique perspectives and making clear recommendations for reforms within the educational system. These findings may influence future initiatives and policies aimed at improving the resilience and well-being of children from divorced households.



Introduction

Is divorce merely a separation between two individuals, or do its effects extend far beyond the end of a marriage? While divorce is legally described as the cessation of a marital relationship between two consenting adults, its repercussions reach deeply into the family unit—especially impacting the children caught in the crossfire. With increasing divorce rates worldwide, the issue has shifted from personal family concern to a major social phenomenon, highlighting the psychological and developmental effects on teenagers. Young adults, confronting one of the most crucial developmental periods in their lives, frequently bear the emotional, social, and academic pressures of their parents' separation. In this regard, it is essential that educators, parents, and mental health professionals work together in meeting the various requirements of adolescents impacted by divorce.

Divorce began in Mesopotamia and was first codified into law. Since then, legal systems around the world have come to recognize and organize the process of marriage dissolution. Divorce rates have risen significantly particularly during the 1970s, reflecting changing societal views toward marriage and family formations (Amato, 2000). However, amid legal proceedings and familial adjustments, teenagers' experiences are usually neglected. In earlier times, the emphasis of divorce laws and family interventions was on property divisions and custody arrangements, with minimal consideration for the emotional and psychological effects on children. It wasn't until the early 2000s that empirical studies began to shed light on the substantial impacts of parental separation on children's well-being, particularly regarding their academic achievements and socio-emotional growth (J.B.Kelly, 2003)

Significant biological, cognitive and psychological changes are seen in the adolescence period of a child's life. During this stage of their lives, they tend to form new identities, look to form relationships and find new meaning in the variety of things they observe. Parental divorce can disrupt the stability within the minds of these teenagers in turn their development is hampered. It has been proven in several research that teenagers coming from divorced families are often affected negatively (J.E.Landsford, 2009). This effect also modifies and changes their emotional wellbeing, making them feel more depressed and anxious.

There are several emotions and feelings that fly across the mind of a teenager who is experiencing the divorce of his/her parents. These feelings are often negatively associated with anxiety, depression, sadness and guilt. To add to these feelings the teenagers also go through a period of troubled confusion when the custody arrangements and battles begin. It is during these times that the teens will adopt



several coping mechanisms to avoid and distract themselves as they will not want to face a situation like that (Pedro-Carroll, 2005). There are teenagers who feel more relaxed and comfortable among their friends. To help the teens adjust to this difficult period, it is importance for parents to have healthy relationships with the child and the presence of supportive family members (J.B.Kelly, 2003).

Educational institutions play a vital role in helping teenagers deal with parental divorce. Teachers are the ones who mostly and often notice psychological and personality changes in teenagers whose parents are separated. They often notice a downfall in academics and withdrawal and isolation tendencies in the teenagers (Potter, 2010). Based on their observations, the teachers assist the teenagers and provide them with a safe environment to feel secure and protected. However, most teachers lack the proficiency and skill to help these children and are unable to understand and comprehend the strategies they should use to help the child (R.M Johnson., 2017).

This study takes note of the educators to understand the psychosocial behaviours and personality of teenagers affected by parental divorce. The study gives a detailed account of the difficulties that teenagers face and the strategies they use to overcome this. A total of 50 teachers from various schools across Bangalore gave their informed consent to take part in this study. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the pattern of observations given by the teachers and repeated observations were taken special note of.

The analysis revealed that there has been a great level of behavioral changes observed in teenagers after their parents' divorce. Most often teenagers are seen to be having mood shifts and do not like to talk about their family situations. The teachers also noted that these teenagers did not like to participate in classroom activities and were always anxious and disturbed in class. Teenagers were not motivated and self-driven to perform in academics leading to a decline in their academic progression.

This research comes up with various strategies and approaches that can are suggested by educators for helping teenagers navigate through the challenges they face back home. The teachers suggested have a close network of supportive friends, school counselling sessions, and equipping the teachers with various training programs guiding them how to help these teens to overcome their difficult phase.

Divorce is just not a legal situation where both adults separate, it even involves childhood. The cognitive and emotional development of these children is completely destroyed and it becomes very important for educational institutions to take the lead to provide a safe place for these children. This study adds to the expanding body of literature advocating systemic interventions in schools, underlining the importance of educators as vital allies in fostering resilience and well-being among adolescents from divorced families. By centering the perspectives of teachers, this research advocates collaborative strategies that address



the academic, emotional, and social requirements of teenagers, ensuring they receive the support necessary to flourish despite familial upheavals.

Review of Literature

Alison Clarke-Stewart, Cornelia Brentano in their book *Divorce: Causes and Consequences* say that most children with married parents experience their parents' divorce before they turn eighteen, affecting around one million children each year. This can be a particularly difficult experience for children. While adults may discover benefits in divorce, such as new work possibilities, hobbies, or relationships, children experience complete loss and turmoil. Children do not see divorce as beneficial. Instead, it causes them confusion and feelings of betrayal as they witness their family breaking apart and feel overlooked amidst their parents' personal struggles (Clarke-Stewart, 2006).

Nicholas H. Wolfinger in his book *Understanding the Divorce Cycle: The Children of Divorce in Their Own Marriages* says that parental divorce often leads to an early start of sexual activity in teenagers, which can sometimes result in unintended marriages. Extensive previous research supports the tendency for teenagers from divorced families to engage in sexual activity earlier (Wolfinger, 2005).

Robert E. Emery in his book *Marriage, Divorce, and Children's Adjustment* says that supportive peer groups for children from divorced families aim to reduce feelings of isolation, provide support, and correct misunderstandings about divorce. School-based groups have been evaluated through several uncontrolled and a few controlled studies. Most of these studies involved preventive interventions for children who were not specifically identified as needing treatment. Considering that these children were already functioning well, the positive results are particularly noteworthy (Emery, 1999).

Gerald R. Adams in his article *The Effects of Divorce on Adolescents* says that during the divorce process, both parents and children often go through feelings of alienation, distress, loneliness, shock, and sometimes denial or depression. However, as time passes, they gradually begin to recover. During this rehabilitation stage, relationships inside and between families and friends are reorganized, lifestyle modifications are made, and personal and family identities are typically redefined (Adams, 1982).

The existing literature indicates a "high risk" time for divorce among children and teenagers. While not every child experiences unfavourable consequences, many develop behavioural issues. Interventions such as family therapy, school counselling, or positive peer groups might assist these adolescents in tapping into their inner strengths to overcome issues arising from their parents' problems, which are not



directly related to the children's behaviour. Self-determination is critical in this therapeutic process, and positive interactions with school officials can have a substantial impact on the children's well-being.

Research Methodology

This research aimed to evaluate educators' evaluations of behavioral and personality shifts in adolescents after parental separation, highlighting direct observations within school environments. A qualitative research method was employed to illustrate the complex and subjective characteristics of teachers' perspectives, emphasizing narrative richness over quantitative analysis. To acquire primary data, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with 50 instructors from public and private schools in Bangalore, India, focusing on those who had worked directly with teens aged 13 to 18 who had been separated from their parents.

The interview was conducted using semi structured format, wherein the researcher followed a set of structured and unstructured questions which were asked in the duration of the communication. Purposive sampling method was used to derive the significant observations of the participants who interacted with the teenagers. The video call method and virtual meeting were used and recorded with the prior consent of the participant. Each interview was videotaped with the participants' permission and then verbatim transcribed to ensure accuracy.

The obtained data underwent thematic analysis, allowing the researcher to detect, code, and classify patterns in the participants' responses. This method involved reviewing transcripts several times, coding significant excerpts, and grouping codes into larger themes such as academic success, behavioral and social changes, emotional health, communication styles, coping strategies, and support networks. Thematic analysis was selected for its structured yet adaptable method of interpreting qualitative data, which is commonly utilized in educational and psychological studies.

To ensure reliability, the research utilized triangulation to contrast responses from a significant number of teachers, identifying consistent themes and minimizing personal bias. To confirm the validity of the interpretations, a selected group of participants received summaries of the main findings.

Ethical considerations were considered. Every teacher gave an informed consent to participate in the research study. Confidentiality was maintained all times.

Discussion of Results

The present study used qualitative methods to assess educators' perspectives on behavioral and personality changes in adolescents following parental separation. The research sought complete



understanding through narrative descriptions rather than numerical evaluations, that aligned to the goal of exploring personal experiences in classrooms.

To gather primary data, 50 teachers from both public and private schools in Bangalore, India, participated in semi-structured interviews. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that participants had relevant experience working with adolescents aged 13 to 18 who were facing the effects of parental separation. Semi-structured interviews blended pre-planned questions with the opportunity to explore emerging themes, yielding rich, honest tales. Interviews were conducted remotely via video conferencing for 30 to 45 minutes to ensure confidentiality and participant comfort. With the participants' permission, all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure data accuracy.

The thematic analysis helped in identifying the trends of the responses given by the participants. Categories were made of the observed and recurring patterns. Some of the important noteworthy categories observed were changes in behavior, social conduct, academics, interactions and networking. This approach was seen to be the appropriate method to identify and conclude this study.

To point out the trends in the observations of the participants, triangulation methods were used. The processes involved in the study was clearly documented to increase validity, integrity, and reliability of the research work.

The participants were given voluntary consent once they were explained about the study. All the participants' details have been made anonymous and documented in a secure manner.

Conclusion

Schools played a vital role of being a great support system for the teenagers who are a part of parents who are divorced. These teenagers very often shown academic decline, social isolation and withdrawal and anger. The school should have a counsellor or set of counsellors who are well skilled and equipped to help these teenagers. The school should encourage senior students as well as friends within the teenagers circle to be of a support to the teenager and help them navigate this period in their life.

Adolescents should be given ample space and a safe environment to speak out their mind, relieve their pain and seek help and support from their peers. The teachers also suggested that assignments given in school should have an adjustable deadline so as to put less pressure on the teen and make them feel less frustrated and aggressive about their situation.

Various observations were noted and emphasized by educators about teenagers coming from divorced families.



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