

Long-term effects of the frame conditions of parental divorce on depressive and (psycho) somatic symptoms among adults, who had experienced parental divorce in childhood

Abstract

The present study concerns on the investigation of long-term consequences of frame conditions of parental divorce on mental and physical well-being of children in young adulthood. Thus, it is a major goal of this study to find out *whether and which* conditions of parental divorce are correlated with an occurrence of depressive and somatic symptoms among adult children and secondly if there are gender-related differences. A sample consisted of 89 university students who had experienced the parental separation or divorce in childhood (before 13 years of age). An average age of students was 6.5 years at the time of parental separation/divorce and an average age of students was 23.5 years at the time of their participation in this study.

For achieving the goal of this study, three questionnaires are used

1. A questionnaire to collect Information on the framework conditions of the parental separation/divorce. This questionnaire is developed by the author of this study. The developed questionnaire includes questions about family background und personal characteristics. The family background includes questions related to the frame conditions during the phases of the parental divorce, namely, pre- divorce, transition, and post-divorce. The questions of this related questionnaire are for example about pre- and post-divorce conflicts, the custody arrangement, the contact between nonresident fathers and children, economic status, remarriage, social support from relatives and friends, etc.
2. Allgemeine Depressionsskala (ADS) as measurement of the depressive symptoms.
3. Freiburger Beschwerdenliste (FBL) as measurement of the psychosomatic symptoms.

The results of this study show that there are correlations between **specific** conditions of the parental divorce and depressive and physical symptoms among adult children.

Many divorce conditions are positively correlated with appearance of depressive symptoms and somatic symptoms such as:

- huge parental marital conflict prior to divorce,
- father custody / joint custody,
- taking the child the responsibility for his parents after the divorce,
- moving,
- frequency of post-divorce conflict.

While the conditions, which are negatively related to depressive and somatic symptoms include for example,

- The conversations between parents and child about new and expected changes after the divorce,
- mothers' custody,
- the employment of mothers after divorce,
- frequency of visitation of the noncustodial parent and the good relationship with the noncustodial parent,
- good relationship with the stepfather,
- the presence of step-brothers, and
- support from relatives.

An important concrete result of this study is that the significant long-term positive effect of the employment of mothers after divorce on the mental and physical well-being among subjects of both genders.

This study show statistically significant gender differences with respect to some relationships between the frame conditions of parental divorce and depressive and somatic symptoms.

The study reveal that factors of parental divorce such as experience parental divorce in pre-school age, joint custody, the remarriage of the mother and the presence of half-brothers, are positively correlated with somatic symptoms among subjects of females and males.

Furthermore, the findings show that the quality of current relationship of the Participants with their mothers are better than with their fathers.