

11 - Effect of family dysfunction

Effect of family dysfunction

© SPMM Course □ First-borns - get more parental time and have higher IQ, are more achievement driven and are more authoritarian, conservative and conformist □ Middle-borns - receive the least attention at home - have strong peer relationships □ Last-borns - receive most attention, get 'spoiled'; independent and rebellious

Effect of family dysfunction Family structure has been known to impact the behaviour of children where those with single parents or large family sizes have been shown to increase behavioural issues. Single-sex couples and extended family involvement in upbringing do not cause the same issues. Dysfunction in families cause discord, rejection of children due to processes such as disengagement and/or overprotection and over-involvement resulting in enmeshment. According to the landmark Cambridge study of Delinquent development by Farrington et al, the most important childhood predictors (during age 8-10) of delinquency were antisocial child behaviour, impulsivity, low intelligence, low attainment, family criminality, poverty and poor parent child rearing behaviour. Parental loss: Most children adapt well to parental divorce if financial support, reasonable contact with non-custodial parent and successful remarriage of single parent take place. If not, poor academic achievement, low self-esteem, 2-3 times more antisocial behaviour and higher rates of later life depression are seen. □ Children of all age groups are prone to short term behavioural difficulties after parental divorce - evident even in infants who may show changes in eating, sleeping and bowel patterns, with fearful or anxious responses. □ 3 - 6 age group often assume responsibility for parental separation □ 7 - 12 age group show decline in school performance □ Adolescents feel hurt, become angry and critical of their parents; they spend most time away from home as a reaction. □ Recovery usually takes 3 to 5 years. □ One third of all children have lasting psychological effects □ Boys are more affected than girls due to parental divorce; Among boys, physical aggression is a common sign of distress. □ Recent divorce or separation of the parents predicts suicide in children. □ 25% step families dissolve in 2 years, whereas 75% are harmonious. □ ADHD, Antisocial PD and conduct problems are more at homes without father.

© SPMM Course □ Children of divorced parents undergo divorce themselves twice more than children of undivorced parent. □ Academic and social aptitude suffers due to divorce; asthma, injuries, headaches and speech defects are more common in divorced families. □ Divorce has more impact than death of a parent on psychological make up of a child □ Suicide rates for

children of divorce are very high □ 25 % have adjustment problems at teenage. □ Parental death has somewhat lesser impact than parental conflict and separation. Bereavement causes increase in temper tantrums, depressive reaction (sadness, irritability), sleep disturbance. Divorce can cause all of the above but protective factors include positive temperament, relationship with other siblings & joint access. Day care: Providing day care for more than 4 months at less than 1 year age for >20hrs a week can increase insecure attachment. If not, day care does not affect development adversely. Adoption: Research shows that the earlier the age of adoption, the better is the outcome for the child. When a child is adopted during early childhood, then the chances of forming new attachments are better. Therefore early adoption is recommended as a matter of social policy. Children adopted before the age of 4 or 5 have been shown to do well generally. Although late adoption after the age of eight, does not necessarily lead to problems in adjustment, such children are more vulnerable and are at risk of developing future problems, like behavioural problems at home and school (Tizard and Hodges 1978). Adopted children become aware of their adopted status most often between 2 to 4 years. Parental disclosure to children about their adoption reduces later psychological trauma. Institutional care: Tizard and Hodges followed up a group of children who had been in institutions from infancy, adopted at age 4 and had been looked after by a number of carers who changed often. At age 8, most children had formed reasonably good attachment with their adoptive parents. At age 16, although the adolescents appeared to be functioning rather well, they showed a constellation of features termed as ex-institutional syndrome. These young people related better to adults than to their peers, were less likely to have a special friend, were less likely to be selective in choosing their friends and turned to peers less often for emotional support. Intrafamilial abuse: Sexual abuse perpetrated by a parent can result in anxiety related symptoms, sexualized behaviour in the child, borderline personality disorder, substance misuse, dissociation and depression.

Revision #1

Created 2026-01-04 20:02:22 UTC by Omar Ayman

Updated 2026-01-04 20:02:22 UTC by Omar Ayman