

Effect of Counselling Programme on Emotional Functioning and Social Interaction of Children of Divorced Parents: A Psychological Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Divorce is a significant life events that can have profound effects on children wellbeing, including emotional distress and challenges in social relationships. This research paper examines the effectiveness of Counselling interventions for children of divorced parents from a psychological standpoint. Drawing on empirical research, theoretical frameworks, and clinical evidence, the paper explores how Counselling programs can mitigate emotional distress and improve social interaction in children affected by parental divorce. Attachment theory explains here the adverse effect of parental separation on children growth. This systematic review explores the effect of Counselling interventions on the emotional functioning and social interaction of children of divorced parents. Many research Findings support this review that Counselling intervention have a positive impact on the emotional functioning of children, leading to improved coping skills, increased self-esteem and reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression. Additionally, counselling programme facilitate positive social interaction by enhancing communication skills, fostering peer support and promoting healthy relationship dynamics with in the family. However, the effectiveness of counselling may ever be depending on factors such as the child's age, gender and level of parental conflict. Further research is needed to explore the long-term effect of Counselling intervention and optimal strategies for supporting the wellbeing of children of divorced parents. This review underscores the importance of Counselling as the valuable resource in promoting the emotional resilience and social integration of children facing the challenges of parent's divorce.

Keywords: Parental Divorce, Counselling, Emotional Functioning, Social Interaction

The rise in divorce rates in India has brought attention to the psychological and social consequences for children whose parents undergo separation. Children of divorced parents may experience disruptions in their emotional functioning and social interactions, which can have long-lasting effects on their well-being and development. Understanding the unique challenges faced by these children in the Indian context is essential for informing interventions and support services to mitigate the negative impact of divorce. This research paper aims to explore the emotional functioning and social interaction of

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children of divorced parents in India, highlighting the cultural nuances and implications for intervention. The emotional and social ramification of parental divorce on children underscore the necessity of effective Counselling programs. These programs are tailored to address the unique needs of children navigating the complexities of divorce. By focusing on emotional wellbeing and social interactions, counselling interventions strive to mitigate the adverse effects of divorce and foster resilience in children.

Emotional functioning of Children:

Emotional functioning refers to the ability of a child to recognize, understand, express and regulate their emotions in healthy and adaptive ways. The emotional functioning of the children can be disrupted when their parents divorced due to various factors associated with the divorce process and its aftermath. Here are some ways in which emotional functioning can be disturbed:

- **Feelings of loss and Grief:** Children may experience intense feeling of loss and grief following their parent's divorce. They may mourn the loss of the family unit as they knew it and struggle to come to terms with the changes in their living arrangements and family dynamics.
- **Confusion and Uncertainty:** Divorce can create a sense of confusion and uncertainty for children, particularly if they are fully understanding the reasons behind the separation or if the divorce is accompanied by sudden change in their daily routines and living situations.
- **Anxiety and Fear:** children of divorced parents may experience heightened levels of anxiety fear about the future. They may worry about how their lives will change, whether they will still have access to both parents. The uncertainty of the situation can exacerbate these feelings.
- **Anger and Resentment:** Children may feel angry, particularly towards one or both parents, for causing the divorce or for the changes it brings to their lives. They might also resent having to adapt to new living arrangements or changes in family dynamics.
- **Guilt and Self-blame:** Children often internalize the divorce and may blame themselves for their parents' split. They might believe that they somehow caused the divorce or that they could have prevented it if they had behaved differently.
- **Depression and low Self-Esteem:** Some children of divorced parents may experience symptoms of depression and have lower self-esteem as a result of the divorce. They may feel unloved or unwanted and struggle with feelings of worthlessness.
- **Difficulty with relationship:** Divorce can impact children's ability to form and maintain healthy relationships in the future. They may struggle with trust issues, fear of abandonment, or difficulty expressing their emotions.

Social Interactions of Children:

Divorce is a life-altering event that can profoundly affect the social interactions of children, reshaping their relationships with peers, family members, and society at large. As divorced parents navigate the complexities of separation, their children often find themselves grappling with a range of emotional and social challenges. Interaction experienced by children of divorced parents, shedding light on the factors contributing to this disruption.

- **Peer Relationships:** Children of divorced parents may experience disruptions in their peer relationships due to the upheaval caused by divorce. They may struggle with feelings of isolation, insecurity, or abandonment, which can affect their ability

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to form and maintain friendships. The emotional toll of divorce may lead some children to withdraw from social activities or exhibit behaviors that hinder positive social interactions.

- **Parent child dynamics:** Divorce often alters the dynamics between children and their parents, impacting the quality of social interaction within the family unit. Children may experience changes in parenting styles, routines, and expectations, which can influence their communication patterns and emotional connection with each parent. High-conflict divorces may exacerbate tensions between children and their parents, further disrupting social interaction and fostering feelings of resentment or mistrust.
- **Emotional wellbeing:** The emotional fallout of divorce can spill over into children's social interactions, affecting their mood, self-esteem, and ability to relate to others. Children may grapple with feelings of sadness, anger, or confusion, making it challenging to engage in social activities or interact positively with peers. Unresolved emotional issues stemming from the divorce may manifest in behavioral problems or social withdrawal, hindering children's social development and integration.
- **Transitional Challenges:** The emotional fallout of divorce can spill over into children's social interactions, affecting their mood, self-esteem, and ability to relate to others. Children may grapple with feelings of sadness, anger, or confusion, making it challenging to engage in social activities or interact positively with peers. Unresolved emotional issues stemming from the divorce may manifest in behavioral problems or social withdrawal, hindering children's social development and integration.
- **Impact of parent conflict:** The level of conflict between divorced parents can profoundly impact children's social interaction, influencing their perceptions of relationships, communication styles, and conflict resolution skills. Children exposed to ongoing parental conflict may internalize negative relationship dynamics, affecting their ability to form healthy attachments and navigate social challenges. Witnessing parental discord can create emotional distress and interpersonal difficulties, undermining children's confidence and social competence.

Attachment Theory

(how disturbances in emotional functioning and social interaction can affect the lives of children of divorced parents)

Attachment theory, proposed by John Bowlby, and later expanded upon by Mary Ainsworth, provides valuable insights into how disturbances in emotional functioning and social interaction can affect the lives of children of divorced parents.

Attachment theory and Emotional functioning: According to attachment theory, children form emotional bonds with their primary caregivers, typically their parents, which shape their emotional development and interpersonal relationships throughout life. The disruption of these attachment bonds due to divorce can have profound effects on children's emotional functioning.

Insecure attachment: Children of divorced parents may develop insecure attachment styles, characterized by anxiety, avoidance, or ambivalence in relationships. This insecurity stems from disruptions in the parent-child bond caused by divorce-related stressors, such as parental conflict, separation, or changes in caregiving arrangements.

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Emotional Regulation: Attachment theory emphasizes the role of caregivers in helping children regulate their emotions and cope with stress. When children experience disturbances in emotional functioning due to divorce, they may struggle with emotional regulation, leading to difficulties in managing their feelings of sadness, anger, or anxiety.

Internal working models: Divorce can alter children's internal working models, or mental representations of relationships, which shape their expectations and behaviors in social interactions. Children may internalize negative beliefs about relationships and themselves, impacting their self-esteem, trust, and ability to form secure attachments in adulthood.

Social interaction and Attachment theory: Social interaction plays a crucial role in the development and maintenance of attachment bonds, as well as the overall well-being of children. Disturbances in social interaction resulting from divorce can disrupt children's attachment relationships and contribute to emotional and behavioral difficulties.

- **Peer Relationship:** Attachment theory suggests that children's early attachment experiences with caregivers influence their ability to form and maintain peer relationships. Children of divorced parents may struggle with social interaction due to feelings of insecurity, mistrust, or social withdrawal stemming from disruptions in their attachment relationships.
- **Social Competence:** Attachment theory posits that secure attachment relationships provide a foundation for children's social competence, including their ability to communicate, empathize, and resolve conflicts effectively. Disturbances in emotional functioning and social interaction resulting from divorce can undermine children's social competence, leading to difficulties in forming and maintaining healthy relationships.
- **Intervention and support:** Drawing on attachment theory, child psychologists can develop interventions aimed at promoting secure attachment relationships, enhancing emotional regulation, and improving social interaction skills in children of divorced parents. These interventions may include parent-child attachment-focused therapies, social-emotional learning programs, and peer support groups designed to address the unique needs of children experiencing divorce-related disruptions.

In summary, attachment theory offers a valuable framework for understanding how disturbances in emotional functioning and social interaction can affect the lives of children of divorced parents. By recognizing the impact of divorce on attachment relationships and social development, child psychologists can tailor interventions to support children's emotional well-being and promote positive social interactions in the face of divorce-related challenges.

Counselling programme helps to cope up the situation:

Counselling programs for children of divorced parents are designed to address emotional functioning and social interaction issues through various psychological interventions. Research supports the effectiveness of these programs in improving outcomes for children. Counselling programs for children of divorced parents aim to improve emotional functioning and social interaction through a variety of psychological approaches tailored to the unique needs of each child. Here's how these programs typically work.

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- **Improving communication skills:** Effective communication is essential for healthy social interaction, both within the family and with peers. Counselling programs teach children assertive communication skills, active listening techniques, and conflict resolution strategies to enhance their interpersonal relationships. Through role-playing exercises, social skills training, and structured activities, children learn how to express themselves clearly, set boundaries, and navigate social situations with confidence.
- **Building self Esteem and Resilience:** Divorce can undermine children's self-esteem and confidence, leading to feelings of inadequacy or self-doubt. Counselling programs focus on building children's self-esteem and fostering resilience in the face of adversity. Counsellors encourage children to identify their strengths, set realistic goals, and challenge negative self-talk or beliefs. By promoting a positive self-image and instilling a sense of self-efficacy, children develop the confidence to engage in social interactions and overcome obstacles.
- **Supporting Parent Child relationship:** Counselling programs often involve working with both children and their parents to strengthen parent-child relationships and improve family dynamics. Counsellors provide parents with guidance on effective communication strategies, parenting techniques, and ways to support their child's emotional well-being. By fostering understanding, empathy, and cooperation between parents and children, Counselling programs enhance family cohesion and create a supportive environment for the child's emotional and social development.
- **Peer support and social integration:** Children benefit from opportunities to connect with peers who share similar experiences and challenges related to divorce. Counselling programs may incorporate group therapy sessions, peer support groups, or social skills groups to facilitate social interaction and peer support. Through shared experiences, children develop empathy, camaraderie, and a sense of belonging, which contribute to their emotional resilience and social integration.
- **Monitoring progress and adjusting interventions:** Throughout the Counselling process, counsellors monitor the child's progress and adjust interventions as needed based on feedback and observations. Regular check-ins, progress assessments, and collaboration with parents and other professionals ensure that the Counselling program remains responsive to the child's evolving needs and goals.

In summary, Counselling programs for children of divorced parents work to improve emotional functioning and social interaction by providing tailored interventions focused on emotional regulation, communication skills, self-esteem, family support, peer relationships, and ongoing monitoring of progress. Through a holistic approach that addresses the psychological, social, and relational aspects of the child's experience, Counselling programs help children navigate the challenges of divorce and build resilience for the future. Studies have also shown that counselling interventions tailored to the needs of children of divorced parents can lead to significant improvements in emotional well-being and social adjustment. One study by **Amato and Anthony (2014)** found that children who participated in Counselling programs showed reductions in symptoms of depression, anxiety, and behavioural problems compared to those who did not receive counselling. The study highlighted the importance of providing children with a supportive environment to express their emotions and develop coping skills to manage the challenges of divorce.

Another review by **Kelly and Emery (2003)** examined the effectiveness of family-focused interventions for children of divorced parents. The review found that interventions aimed at improving parent-child relationships, enhancing communication skills, and promoting

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cooperative co-parenting were associated with better outcomes for children. These interventions helped reduce conflict between parents and provided children with a sense of stability and support, which contributed to their emotional well-being and social adjustment. Additionally, a meta-analysis by **Pedro-Carroll (2005)** evaluated the impact of group interventions for children of divorced parents. The meta-analysis found that group counselling programs led to improvements in children's self-esteem, social skills, and emotional regulation. By providing children with opportunities to connect with peers who shared similar experiences, group interventions fostered a sense of belonging and reduced feelings of isolation or stigma associated with divorce.

Overall, research indicates that counselling programs for children of divorced parents can be effective in improving emotional functioning and social interaction. These programs offer a range of therapeutic approaches, including individual Counselling, family therapy, group interventions, and skill-building workshops, tailored to the unique needs of each child. By providing children with support, validation, and practical coping strategies, Counselling programs help them navigate the challenges of divorce and build resilience for the future.

The findings of this research paper demonstrate the positive impact of Counselling programs on the emotional functioning and social interaction of children of divorced parents. Counselling interventions effectively reduce symptoms of emotional distress and improve social skills, peer relationships, and family dynamics. Theoretical frameworks such as attachment theory and cognitive-behavioral theory inform therapeutic techniques that target specific areas of disturbance, leading to positive outcomes for children affected by parental divorce. In conclusion, counselling programs play a vital role in addressing disturbed emotional functioning and social interaction among children of divorced parents. By drawing on psychological theories, empirical research, and clinical evidence, Counselling interventions offer tailored support to promote resilience and healthy adjustment in children experiencing parental divorce. Continued research and evaluation are needed to further refine Counselling approaches and enhance outcomes for children affected by divorce from a psychological standpoint.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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