

Comparative Study

The Influence of Family Structure on Resilience, Emotional Regulation, and Maladaptive Thought Patterns in Young Adults: A Comparative Study of Divorced and Non-Divorced Families

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ABSTRACT

Parental relationships have a significant impact on young adults, influencing their well-being across various aspects of life. This study aims to explore the influence of parental relationship on resilience, emotional regulation and maladaptive thought patterns of young adults. A total of 106 adults aged 18-29 took part in the study, with an equal split of 53 participants from divorced households and 53 from non-divorced households. The study's findings indicate that there is a notable distinction in resilience and emotional regulation between young adults from divorced families and those from non-divorced families. This study also demonstrated that individuals from divorced families tend to exhibit higher levels of maladaptive thought patterns. The implications for these findings are discussed.

Keywords: *Parental Relationship, Divorced Families, Non-divorced Families, Resilience, Emotional Regulation, Maladaptive Thought Patterns*

The role of family is crucial to the development of children. Each person's home is a microcosm of their own universe. The attainment of genuine respect and kindness can be accomplished by fostering an enduring bond of companionship, friendship, and unity among family members. This includes nurturing everlasting parental, filial, brotherly, and friendly relationships that persist throughout eternity in an infinite existence, all while firmly believing in this notion. (Çaksen H., 2022)

Divorce:

Divorce, or the legal dissolution of marriage, is the formal procedure for terminating a marital union. This process entails meticulously untangling the legal obligations and responsibilities established during the marriage. Divorce is a significant life occurrence that induces a considerable amount of stress for the entire family. Children are reliant on their parents and face disadvantages during divorce due to the fact that they have little control over the situation. Children frequently lack the necessary knowledge and abilities to effectively navigate the difficulties associated with divorce. The primary impediment that hinders a child's ability to effectively cope with changes in the family is the presence of conflicting relationships between parents. (Çaksen H., 2022)

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Received: May 22, 2024; Revision Received: June 27, 2024; Accepted: June 30, 2024

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Divorce can be challenging and uncommon in areas where traditional religious authority still holds sway, particularly when the religious tradition considers marriage to be irreversible, as it does for Hindus and Roman Catholics. In certain countries, however, custom may make divorce a straightforward process. In the industrialised world, divorce is becoming more and more common due to the ideals of mutual consent and individual determination. Because premodern societies have different meanings of marriage and divorce, it is challenging to assess the rate of marital stability in these communities. (Britannica, T., 2024)

Impact of Parental Divorce on Young adults

Young adults are people who fall within the age range of 18 to 39. Despite having reached adulthood, individuals in this stage of life are still acquiring knowledge and understanding about the responsibilities and challenges of being adults. As a result, they are susceptible to the influence of their parents' divorce. Numerous studies, such as the one carried out in 2009 by Ross and Miller, have demonstrated that divorce can have long-lasting negative effects on people. This demonstrates that young individuals are more susceptible to being impacted, as they are on the verge of entering significant relationships that may culminate in marriage. Divorce often has significant repercussions for young adults, particularly in terms of their psychological well-being, social skills, academic performance, and behaviour. These effects can continue into adulthood.

A young adult who is currently in college or about to graduate is likely to have either established a committed relationship or is on the verge of entering one with their partner. While a person's interactions and compatibility with their spouse may have an impact, they also seek advice from their parents. If their parents are still together, this motivates them to pursue a long-lasting relationship. Nevertheless, children of divorced parents are prone to harbouring uncertainties regarding the institution of marriage or its inherent importance.

Furthermore, a considerable proportion of young adults who have gone into matrimony are terminating their marital union without exerting further effort to resolve their issues, possibly due to the influence of their parents' decision to divorce. These studies demonstrate that parental divorce has a substantial influence on young adults, as they depend on their parents to serve as role models for managing relationships and addressing marital issues.

If young adults lack the capacity to adapt to the consequences of parental divorce, they are prone to resorting to substance abuse and drug dependency as a means of coping. This not only has a detrimental impact on their academic performance, aspirations, and accomplishments, but also drives them towards engaging in criminal behaviours such as aggression, partner abuse, and theft in order to sustain their addictive habits.

Resilience:

Resilience is the specific capacity to bounce back from challenging circumstances, rather than a state of being impervious to adversity. Resilience is a complex cognitive process that encompasses several internal mechanisms and techniques that humans employ when confronted with difficulties or hardship. Our methodology facilitates the acquisition of skills that enhance these aspects of resilience in young individuals. (Liz Robson, 2022)

The circumstances that foster a young person's capacity for resilience also contribute to their overall well-being. However, the primary components need for resilience to emerge are

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experiences of adversity. Resilience cannot exist in the absence of hardship. (Liz Robson, 2022)

Emotional Regulation

Young adulthood is a critical phase in life marked by challenges in social and emotional aspects, and increased vulnerability to emotions as individuals navigate the complexities of this sophisticated developmental stage. Adolescents who have undergone childhood trauma and developmental stress are more prone to this vulnerability. These early life events can hinder their ability to develop the essential skills and strategies for effectively regulating their emotions. Adverse life experiences, such as abuse, neglect, family strife, and homelessness, significantly impact the development of an individual's capacity to control emotions. The majority of mental health disorders emerge during the transition from late adolescence to early adulthood, thus amplifying the already significant vulnerability of this particular group of young persons. (Juby, 2022)

Maladaptive thought patterns

Maladaptive thoughts and beliefs refer to cognitive patterns that are unhelpful or dysfunctional in nature.

Maladaptive thinking refers to a notion that is both untrue and without reasonable support. Typically, these beliefs arise as a means of safeguarding ourselves from a distressing or unpleasant situation. Encountering the demise of a cherished individual, unemployment, the termination of a relationship, or even grappling with a dependency are circumstances that we may desire to protect oneself from. This is usually known as a "defence mechanism." Various negative feelings such as incompetence, despair, grief, feeling inadequate, and wrath can emerge from an unfavourable encounter. The concept of "defence" gives rise to a sensation that instinctively prompts us to respond or act in a way that validates our emotions. The issue lies in the fact that as time passes, we develop a consistent pattern of negativity that we rely on to unjustifiably justify ourselves. (Sharda Wright, 2020)

METHODOLOGY

Objectives

- The objective of this study is to examine and contrast the resilience levels in young adults who come from divorced households with those who come from families that have not experienced divorce.
- The objective is to examine and contrast emotional regulation in young adults who come from divorced homes with those who come from non-divorced families.
- The objective of this study is to examine and contrast maladaptive thought processes in young adults who come from divorced households with those who come from families that have not experienced divorce.

Variables

This study included four variables. Young adults from divorced families and those not from divorced families were the demographic variables. The three psychological variables were Resilience, Emotional Regulation and Maladaptive Thought Patterns.

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Hypothesis:

- **Null Hypothesis:** There is no significant difference in resilience, emotional regulation and maladaptive thought patterns between those from divorced families and those from non-divorced families

Alternative Hypothesis:

- Resilience is higher in young adults who come from divorced households than those who come from families that have not experienced divorce.
- Emotional Regulation is lower in young adults who come from divorced households than those who come from families that have not experienced divorce.
- Maladaptive thought Patterns are higher in young adults who come from divorced households than those who come from families that have not experienced divorce.

Sample

Snowball sampling was used to collect data of young adults from divorced households and those from non-divorced households. A total of 106 participants took part in this study, out of which 53 came from divorced families and 53 from non-divorced families. The eligibility criteria for this research were young adults between the ages of 18-29. The importance of participants' safety and anonymity was emphasised, and their informed consent was secured. The study obtained all necessary authorizations.

Instruments

- **The Brief Resilience Scale** measures an individual's capacity to quickly recover and adapt to stressful situations. The selection of the six items was based on the opinions of research team members and piloting with undergraduate students. The items are evaluated based on agreement using a five-point scale.
- **The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ)** is a self-report assessment consisting of 10 items that measures two specific techniques for regulating emotions: cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression.
- **The Automatic Thoughts Questionnaire (ATQ)** was established by Hollon and Kendall in 1980. The questionnaire is a self-reported Likert-type instrument consisting of 30 items. The replies to the items can vary from 1 (indicating no occurrence) to 5 (indicating constant occurrence).

Procedure

Data was collected with the use of a survey both online and offline. Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) Automatic thoughts questionnaire-Negative (ATQ-N)(for maladaptive thought processes) were used to collect data. The importance of participants' safety and anonymity was emphasised, and their informed consent was secured. The study obtained all necessary authorizations.

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RESULTS

The results were the following:

Brief Resilience Scale (BRS):

Descriptive Statistics

	Marital Status of Parents	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
BRS	Divorced	53	3.091195	.7124036	.0978562
	Married	53	2.477987	.5915773	.0812594

		t-test for Equality of Means						
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
BRS	Equal variances assumed	-4.821	104	.002	-0.613208	0.127196	-0.865443	-0.360972
	Equal variances not assumed	-4.821	100.604	.002	-0.613208	0.127196	-0.865543	-0.360872

The p-value (0.002) indicates a highly significant ($p < 0.05$) significance level, indicating that parental divorce has a considerable impact on the resilience of those from divorced families compared to those from non-divorced families.

Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ):

Group Statistics					
	Status of the respondent	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
ERQ	Divorced	53	52.43	9.599	1.318
	Married	53	46.72	8.558	1.176

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means						
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
ERQ	Equal variances assumed	3.236	104	0.002	5.717	1.766	2.214	9.22
	Equal variances not assumed	3.236	102.661	0.002	5.717	1.766	2.213	9.22

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The p-value (0.002) indicates a highly significant ($p < 0.05$) significance level, indicating that parental divorce has a considerable impact on the resilience of those from divorced families compared to those from non-divorced families.

**Automatic Thoughts Questionnaire (ATQ):
Descriptive Statistics**

	Status of the respondent	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
ATQ	1	53	116.64	25.865	3.553
	2	53	80.87	31.450	4.320

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means						
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
ATQ	Equal variances assumed	6.396	104	0.003	35.774	5.593	24.682	46.865
	Equal variances not assumed	6.396	100.263	0.003	35.774	5.593	24.677	46.87

The p-value (0.003) indicates a highly significant ($p < 0.05$) significance level, indicating that parental divorce has a considerable impact on the resilience of those from divorced families compared to those from non-divorced families.

According to the above score, there is a significant difference between resilience, emotional regulation, and maladaptive thought patterns between those who come from divorced households and those from non-divorced households.

DISCUSSION

This study shows that **resilience** is higher among young adults from divorced family backgrounds. There is ongoing debate regarding the notion that individuals from divorced families may possess greater resilience. Young Adults from divorced families often acquire valuable coping mechanisms and resilience skills as they navigate the challenges associated with their parents' divorce. One can acquire the ability to adjust to shifts in family dynamics, effectively handle disagreements, and cultivate critical thinking abilities. They may have greater chances to cultivate independence and self-reliance as they navigate through shifts in family dynamics. They might acquire the ability to shoulder responsibilities at a younger age and cultivate a sense of independence. Going through a divorce can lead them to cultivate a deeper understanding of their emotions and develop a heightened sense of empathy. They may develop a heightened awareness of their own emotions and the emotions of others, which can help them better navigate through challenging situations.

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The study also showed that **emotional regulation** is lower in those from divorced family backgrounds. The capacity to control and react to one's own emotions in a variety of contexts is known as emotional regulation. Young adults from divorced homes may have poorer emotional regulation for a number of reasons. Conflict, instability, and uncertainty are hallmarks of a very stressful family environment that can result from divorce. A child's capacity to properly control their emotions may be impacted by growing up in such an atmosphere, as they may feel more fearful, depressed, or anxious. Children of divorced parents or caregivers may exhibit aggressive behavior, avoidance, or emotional outbursts as maladaptive coping mechanisms. These actions may pose as role models for handling challenging emotions, which could cause children to struggle with emotional regulation. Divorce can cause feelings of rejection, abandonment, or uncertainty in children who have attachment bonds with their parents. Since they offer children a safe foundation from which to explore and regulate their emotions, healthy attachment relationships are essential for the development of emotional regulation skills.

When it comes to young adults who come from divorced households, high **maladaptive thought patterns** can show in a variety of different ways. These patterns have been the topic of substantial research in the fields of psychology and family studies. These patterns, which frequently originate from the experience of parental divorce during infancy or adolescence during the individual's formative years, can have a significant impact on the person's psychological well-being and social functioning. (Steinberg, S. J., & Silverberg, S. B., 2018,)

As a consequence of the divorce, young adults may develop a less-than-ideal picture of themselves, experiencing feelings of inadequacy or unworthiness. It is possible for them to take responsibility for the breakup of their parents' marriage by themselves, which might result in emotions of guilt or shame. In young adults, the experience of parental divorce can instill a fear of abandonment, which can hinder their capacity to form and sustain meaningful relationships with other people because of this fear. They might have a hard time putting their trust in other people and worry about losing the people they care about.

Young adults' perspectives on relationships and marriage might be influenced by the setting in which they were raised, which may be a divorced household. It is possible for them to develop gloomy attitudes regarding the durability and longevity of romantic engagements, which can result in difficulties in creating relationships that make them feel fulfilled. Divorce between parents can cause disruptions in the attachment link that exists between a parent and a kid, which can have a negative impact on the young adult's capacity to create secure bonds as an adult. They may struggle with intimacy and closeness in relationships, exhibiting attachment patterns that are anxious or avoidant depending on the circumstances.

Interventions that are aimed at addressing maladaptive thought patterns and fostering resilience in young adults who come from families that have been divorced may include therapy, support groups, and focused interventions to increase coping skills and develop healthy relationship attitudes. (Steinberg, S. J., & Silverberg, S. B., 2018,)

CONCLUSION

The impact of parental divorce can be extremely devastating, leaving members of the family with a difficult time recovering. While parental divorce can pose challenges for young adults, impacting their emotional regulation, resilience, and even romantic relationships, the

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ultimate influence depends on various factors. Strong social support networks and healthy ongoing relationships with both parents can mitigate the negative effects. Research also suggests that some young adults even develop greater independence and resilience due to their experience.

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Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Patil, S. (2024). The Influence of Family Structure on Resilience, Emotional Regulation, and Maladaptive Thought Patterns in Young Adults: A Comparative Study of Divorced and Non-Divorced Families. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 12(2), 4711-4720. DIP:18.01.420.20241202, DOI:10.25215/1202.420