

# A Study of adolescent peer relationship associated with parents divorce

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## 부모 이혼이 청소년 또래관계에 미치는 영향

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**Abstract** Objective: To review the literature on development in the peer relationships of the adolescents within the context of their parents' divorce. Method: The cognitive and sociocultural literature was searched to analyze the social interactions of the adolescents of divorced parents. Results: The evidence supports the variations in adolescents' peer relations based on their family structure. Comparisons with the adolescents of the nuclear families and the step-families suggest certain types of interactions the adolescents of divorced parents experience. Conclusions: Divorce of the parents is associated with the difficulties their children at adolescent experience, such as the higher level of social isolation among their peers or their incompetence in social skills. For there is not much known about the integration into the world of peers of the adolescents from the divorced families, while their general psychological and cognitive development after the separation is often studied, future study will need to focus on their peer interactions at their school environment and the social treatment for the possible hardships in their peer relations.

**Key Words** : Peer relationship, Adolescent, Divorce, Cognitive and sociocultural analysis, Interaction

요 약 부모의 이혼이 청소년의 또래 관계 발전에 미치는 영향에 관한 연구목적을 두었으며, 이혼한 부모를 가진 청소년들의 사회적 상호 작용을 분석한 기존문헌을 검토하였다. 그 결과 청소년들의 가족 구조에 기초한 또래 관계의 다양성을 뒷받침하는 연구가 되었으며 핵가족의 청소년들과 비교해 보면, 이혼한 부모를 가진 의붓 가족의 청소년들이 경험하는 특정한 형태의 상호 작용을 가지고 있었다. 즉 부모들의 이혼은 그들의 아이들이 사춘기 때 겪는 어려움과 관련이 있는데, 예를 들어 또래들 사이에서 고립형태의 모습을 보이거나 낮은 자존감, 소통기술의 부재 등을 나타내었다. 이혼가정의 청소년 또래집단의 일반적인 심리적, 인지적 발달은 종종 연구되나 향후 미래 연구는 그들의 학교에서의 또래 상호 작용과 사회적 인 상호 작용을 연구해야 할 것이다.

주제어 : 청소년 또래관계, 이혼, 사춘기, 사회인지분석, 상호작용

## 1. Introduction

Family structure is an important context in the children's' development, especially at their adolescence. Their relationships with the parents often affect the relationships with their peers. It is known that the adolescents are influenced stronger by their relationship

with the parents at the early to middle adolescence, but they begin to hold equal mutual influence of parents and friend at middle to late adolescence[1]. Although it is indicated that the influence of parents decreases whereas the influence of friends increases during the adolescents, the result suggested that the adolescents

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considered both social worlds equally important toward their late adolescence[1]. The adolescents are known to obtain social skills and interaction skills at home with their parents, and those skills are used, directly and indirectly, when they begin to form relationships outside their home[2]. By this it can be predicted that the parent-adolescent relationship heavily influence the adolescents' social ability with the peers, and that the absence of parent-adolescent relationship increases the likelihood of their difficulty in their peer relations. Based on the review of several literatures, it will be investigated whether the divorce is correlated to the children's peer relations at their adolescence.

## 2. Adolescent peer relationship associated with parents divorce

The study "Linkages Over Time Between Adolescents' Relationships with Parents and Friends" by De Goede et al. examines the adolescents' perceptions of relationships with parents and friends with respect to support, negative interaction and power[1]. The samples of 474 early adolescents with 54.1% of boys, 337 middle adolescents with 43.3% boys participated in the study[1]. Five measurement waves were used for the participants with a 10 year interval between each of the waves[1]. Data was collected in the fall of each year[1]. The early adolescents were on average 12.4 years of age, and the middle to late adolescents were on average 16.7 years of age[1]. 84.5% of participants were Dutch, and the others were identified as part of a Dutch non-western ethnic minority group[1]. 84% of the participants lived with both parents[1]. The study was taken place in the high schools of Utrecht, the Netherlands[1]. Their relationships with the parents and friends were measured under three factors: support, negative interaction and power[1]. The support scale measures the amount of support the adolescents perceive from mothers, fathers and best friends separately[1]. The

scale contained twelve items such as companionship, instrumental aid, intimacy, nurturance, affection, admiration and reliable alliance[1]. The items were answered on a 5-point Likert scale, from 1=little or not at all to 5=more is not possible[1]. The negative interaction scale measures the intensity of negative interaction, with the subscales of the conflict and antagonism with the 5-point Likert scale[1]. The power scale measures the amount of power the adolescents attributed to their parents and friends with the subscales of relative power and the dominance with the 5-point Likert scale[1]. In the results, it was found that the adolescents' perceptions of support from parents and friends were positively associated[1]. Their perceptions of negative interaction with parents and with friends were positively associated, where perceptions of power of parents and of friends were also positively associated[1]. These findings indicate that when the adolescents perceive their parents supportive, they also perceive their friends supportive[1]. These associations suggest that the adolescents' relationships with their parents and friends mutually influence each other during adolescence[1].

The study "Divorce-Related Transitions, Adolescent Development, and the Role of Parent-Child Relationship: A Review of the Literature" by Hines examines divorce and related family transitions affect adolescents and assess the role of parent-child relationship during the transitions. Parenting styles and parent-child relationship were studied to review the influence the adolescents receive when coping with family transitions[3]. The study reviewed several literatures, and the majority of samples on the studies were based on homogeneous samples from White, middle-class contexts of separated families[3]. The samples were reviewed with the variety of contexts from bonds, agreement and affection within the family to their academic achievement, school adjustment, sexual behavior and peer relationships[3]. The literatures, in their results, suggest that the children of divorced families are at higher risk for experiencing

difficulties in academic achievement, delinquency, disruptions in peer relationships, precocious sexual behavior and substance abuse[3]. The effects of divorce on adolescents result in more negative consequences for boys than for girls[3]. There were reports of greater depression among the adolescents of divorced parents at their later stages of adolescence[3]. The study also suggest that the adolescents of divorced parents tend to insulate themselves from divorce through peer relationship, although the disruption in their parents' relationship may make them find it difficult to invest in relationships and to believe that they can be stable and faithful[3].

In the literature of "Peer relations of adolescents from nuclear and separated families" by Noack et al., the variations in adolescents' peer relations depending on the family structure are examined in comparison to the adolescents from nuclear families, single-parent families and step-families[2]. The families from East and West Germany were considered samples in the study[2]. It was reported that the single-parent families and step-families were more "normal" in the East Germany than in West Germany[2]. The samples consist of 204 children from nuclear families, 165 from step-father families and 220 from single-mother families[2]. The participants' ages were evenly distributed over the second decade of life, and both genders are about equally represented[2]. The families lived in industrial urban areas of the respective part of the country, and the school tracks of different academic demand were also considered[2]. The peer network and quality of friendships were measured[2]. Peer network were measured in a scale of problem behaviors, such as shop-lifting, truancy or beating somebody, to define the deviant peers[2]. To define the constructive peers, the scale of societal expectations, such as playing musical instrument, learning for tests in school or political participation, was used[2]. Adolescents were asked to report how many friends of their peer network were involved in a problem behaviors and how many were involved in a given leisure activity[2]. When measuring

a quality of friendship, three scales from the Network of Relationship Inventory were used: Admiration, intimacy and conflict[2]. It was served to assess different aspects of the socio-emotional quality of adolescents' relationships with their best friend[2]. The results suggested that the analysis of adolescents' integration in deviant peer groups showed the variation depending on age group and the effect of school track[2]. High track students reported having smaller numbers of deviant peers in their network, and the type of family in which adolescents grew up did not make any different with regard to deviant peers in the networks[2]. The number of constructive peers differed depending on age again. The oldest age group of adolescents had more constructive peers[2]. West Germans indicated a higher involvement with constructive peers than their East German age-mates[2]. As for the quality of friendships, young West Germans reported higher levels of recognition on their friends than those from the East[2]. Admiration by females showed an increase with age, thus resulting in significant gender difference among the adolescents[2]. In measuring intimacy, East Germans reported lower friendship intimacy, and again, the difference of intimacy in male and female adolescents' friendship was significant[2]. While measuring the conflict, the boys reported higher conflict rates than girls. Over all, the family background did not play a role concerning deviant peers, but it did concerning the constructive peers-adolescents of nuclear families were reported to have more constructive peers in their network[2]. Noack concluded that the adolescents' peer relations are influenced by parental separation only to a small extent. In fact, the least favorable reports were given by those from high conflict nuclear families than by those from separated families, and the conflict related to parental separation does not have long-term effects on adolescents' peer relations.

The study "Children of Divorce: A Group Program in Community Welfare Centers" by H.W.Yang & M.H.Jeon examines divorce during the divorce period, "

What do children in the divorce family have in relation to their parents' divorce? " The Progem RAM, used in this study, is a small group program in which parents of divorced family members are developed for the same emotional and behavioral changes in their children, enabling children to explore their own experiences related to the parent's soul. Based on results, practical and policy measures were proposed to effectively support divorced family children and their parents. This research will contribute to expanding understanding of the experience of divorced families, especially those of low-income divorced families and their children, and to clarify the topic of involvement that should be considered in the process of helping them[4].

The study "Differences in the effects of self-Differentiation to school adjustment of adolescents from Single Parent and Both Parents Families" examines how Single-Parent and Both-Parent Families effect adolescents' 'Self-Differentiation' and School Adjustment'. And so, to identify the roles of adolescents' 'Self-Differentiation' on 'School Adjustment'. The results follows. First, between Single-Parent and Both-Parent Families, no significant difference was found in adolescents' 'Self-Differentiation', adolescents' 'school Adjustment'. Second, the higher the degree of 'Self-Differentiation' of the students is, the higher 'School Adjustment' is in Single-Parent Families. And Family Regression and Recognition Function & Emotional Function have effect on 'School Adjustment'. Environment-related Adjustment and Friends-related Adjustment are greatly influenced by Family Regression. Teacher-related Adjustment by all variable factors except for Emotional Alienation Third, the higher the degree of 'Self-Differentiation' of the students is, the higher 'School Adjustment' is in Both-Parent Families. And Family Regression, Recognition Function & Emotional Function and Family Projection have effect on 'School Adjustment'. Friends-related Adjustment was greatly influenced by Family Regression, Teacher-related Adjustment by all

variable factors except for Emotional Alienation Fourth, for adolescents in Single and Both-Parent Families, Family Regression have strong influenced on School Adjustment and School Adjustment that most greatly effects Self-Differentiation level was Teacher-related Adjustment. For adolescents in Single-Parent Families, Family Projection had no effect on whole School Adjustment, whereas for adolescents in Both-Parent Families, Family Projection had effect on School Adjustment and Self-Integration had no effect on School Adjustment[5].

The study "A study of influencing factors to teenagers' maladjustment at school life" analyzed what factors influence teenagers' maladjustment at school life and looking for social arrangement. As a result of the analysis, the first factor is divorce and death of their parents. The second reason is conflict and violence between their family. Third is their own physical trouble and relationship with friends. However, there is an important factor we can found is differences of economic status within friends. This family background also can highly effect their psychological impact compare to other factors. Through putting the results together, at the point of increasing divorce and decreasing a meaning of importance of family, teenagers' maladjustment at school life should be needed advising center which must do organized counseling with teenagers and also a crisis family should prepare a plan how to solve their pain-ful situation. Moreover, the necessity of approaching educational system with school welfare system can be used for diverse and actual help to teenagers' maladjustment. At last, this study have more credibility than before researches because it is based on maladjustment teenagers at school life[6].

### 3. Discussion

De Goede, Branje, Delsing and Meeus' study focuses on the adolescents' perceptions toward their

relationships both with the parents and friends, but the adolescents are not particularly from the separated families. In fact, most of them lived with both parents[1,7,8]. However, this perception of “normative” adolescents about the importance they feel about their relationships with the parents, which is also correlated with those with their friends, suggest that parents’ role in helping their children develop their social skills, especially at adolescence, is significant. This also helps us understand the need of parents when it comes to adolescents’ learning of forming peer relations and social interactions. Relationships with the parents are positively associated with those with the friends, and thus sharing positive interactions with their parents is an important factor for the adolescents in making friends outside their home[1]. Hines’ review of literatures examined how divorce affects the children at adolescence in their development in general. Peer relationship is not a particular focus, although it is often mentioned that antisocial behavior among adolescents was found often in mother-only households and in conflict-ridden families and that children of divorced families are at higher risk of experiencing the disruptions in peer relationships[3]. It is also indicated that the children of divorced parents find it difficult to invest in relationships and to have belief that their relationships will be stable and faithful[3,9,10]. Noack, Krettek and Walper’s study, in contrast to other two studies, has particular focus on the peer relations of the adolescents from separated families. However, the study concludes that the family structure, especially the parental separation, influences the adolescents’ peer relationships only to a small extent[2,11-13]. The limitations were also witnessed in the studies; Noack’s study was done in East and West Germany, where De Goede’s study was done in Netherlands. This may confuse the results of the studies due to the cultural and regional difference. Also, the measurements in the studies were mostly self-reports of the participants who were mostly adolescents only, which lacks variety in perceptions.

#### 4. Conclusion

Through the review of the studies, their results showed that parents’ divorce holds influence the peer relations of their children at adolescence. Several points are relevant to highlight from the three studies that were reviewed. (1) Perceptions of adolescents about their relationships with their friends and relationships with their parents are positively related, therefore adolescents’ relations with their parents significantly affects their relationships with their friends. (2) Adolescents with divorced parents have higher risks in their academic achievements, precocious sexual behavior, substance abuse, possible depression, and importantly, disruptions in peer relationships. (3) Divorce of parents may result in the adolescents’ negative interactions and difficulty of social skills in peer relations, but only in small extent; however, most difficulty and negative interactions were reported from the adolescents from the nuclear families that often experience conflicts. Although divorce is a factor that is associated with the difficulty that the children at adolescence experience, it does not significantly influence the adolescents in terms of their social abilities.

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