

Topics about: Parental separation/divorce

4- Impact of divorce and loss of parental contact on health complaints among adolescents.

J Public Health (Oxf). 2013 Jun;35(2):278-85. doi: 10.1093/pubmed/fds101. Epub 2013 Jan 4.

Impact of divorce and loss of parental contact on health complaints among adolescents.

Reiter SF, Hjörleifsson S, Breidablik HJ, Meland E.

Source

Department of Neurology, Haukeland University Hospital, Post Box 7804, 5020 Bergen, Norway. simonefr@online.no

Abstract

BACKGROUND:

Mental health consequences related to divorce have been documented, but might be caused by concomitant factors such as conflicts and loss of parental contact (PC). We investigated these relationships and mental health among adolescents.

METHODS:

The study was based on data from four cross-sectional surveys carried out between 1997 and 2009 among tertiary school students in Førde, Norway. We established two groups according to divorce experience (DE) with or without loss of PC. Frequencies of DEs were calculated with 95% confidence intervals. The group with no DE was used as reference group in all the analyses.

RESULTS:

The divorce rate increased by 34% (6.8% absolute increase) between 1997 and 2009, but no sign of attenuated effects on emotional health was observed. Mental complaints were not attenuated as time since divorce increased. A majority of those losing contact with parents had no contact with their fathers. The study revealed only a modest increase of health complaints if PC was preserved, but a marked increase when the adolescents experienced loss of PC following the divorce. Interaction analyses showed no gender differences, and parental support and confidence in parent(s) did not mediate the associations between divorce and distress.

CONCLUSIONS:

Emotional distress after divorce is not attenuated as divorce prevalence increases, but the deleterious effects of divorce on the well-being of adolescents seem to be confined to those experiencing a concomitant loss of PC. Efforts aiming at reducing parental hostility and improving mutual parental responsibility and care therefore seem important.

KEYWORDS:

adolescent, divorce, health complaint, parental contact

PMID: 23292092 [PubMed - in process]