

Topics about: Parental separation/divorce

6- Parental separation/divorce in childhood and partnership outcomes at age 30.

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Parental separation/divorce in childhood and partnership outcomes at age 30.

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Source

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Abstract

BACKGROUND:

Previous research has found that children exposed to separation/divorce may also experience relationship problems in adulthood. The aim of this investigation was to examine this issue in a birth cohort of over 900 New Zealand children studied to age 30.

METHODS:

Data were gathered over the course of the Christchurch Health and Development Study (CHDS). The CHDS is a 30 year longitudinal study of a birth cohort of 1265 children born in Christchurch (NZ) in 1977. The data collected included the following: (a) timing and number of parental separations and divorces from birth to 15 years; (b) partnership outcomes (16-30 years) of the number of cohabiting/marriage partnerships; positive partner relations; negative partner relations; partner adjustment/conduct problems; and interpartner violence victimization and perpetration; and (c) potential covariate factors.

RESULTS:

Study findings showed the presence of significant associations between childhood parental separations/divorces and number of cohabiting/marriage partnerships (16-30 years) ($p < .001$), negative partner relations ($p = .021$), extent of partner adjustment/conduct problems ($p < .001$), and perpetration of interpartner violence ($p = .018$). Childhood parental separation/divorce explained less than 2.5% of the variance in partnership outcomes. These associations were explained statistically by a series of covariate factors associated with childhood parental separation/divorce including parental history of illicit drug use, childhood sexual abuse, childhood conduct problems (7-9 years), interparental conflict and violence, childhood physical punishment/maltreatment, family socio-economic status at the child's birth, and parental history of criminality. Tests of gender interaction showed that the effect of childhood parental separations/divorces may be the same for males and females. Analysis of the number of childhood parental separations/divorces experienced into three age groups (birth to 5, 5-10 years and 10-15 years) yielded similar results.

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CONCLUSIONS:

These findings suggest that the general associations between childhood parental separation/divorce and partner relationships in adulthood reflect the consequences of various contextual factors that are associated with childhood parental separation.

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KEYWORDS:

Adulthood, child development, family factors, longitudinal studies, marital relationships

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