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Effects of Single Parenting on Children

Contemporary family institutions and values are under constant changes in structure and dynamics. Approximately fifty years ago, the prevailing tendency of a normal family was two parents raising children in the first and only marriage. The relatively low divorce rates because of social views shaped by religious and historical events established a concept that a child would have a positive impact on psychological conditions only if there were two parents. At present, divorce is not a rare phenomenon, and many children have only one parent: a mother or a father. The deeply rooted concept of the “normal” family leads to beliefs close to stereotypes that single parenting has adverse effects on children. Since stereotypes have negative impacts on the perception of “deviations” of any type, it is crucial to investigate the effects of single parenting on children.

For the most part, a single-parent family is a result of a divorce, which is a painful process for a child. In this way, it is possible to argue that the negative perception of single parenting effects on a child emerges from the consequences of divorce. Although every family is a unique institution with various reasons and causes leading to a divorce, some short-term or long-term effects might be the same. For instance, a child might spend less time with the parent who is not assigned as custodial, and at the same time, a custodial parent is forced to work more than previously to ensure a child’s emotional well-being (Anderson 380). Apart from being stressed, a child is exposed to the threat of lowering academic performance with a negative

impact on his or her education. There is also the issue of social detachment with the possibility that a child would tend to solve a conflict with verbal aggression and violence (Anderson 381). In addition, a child could have a distorted perception of a family, resulting in problems of having relationships with other people. Nonetheless, one should always remember the uniqueness of each family, which implies that a child could have the same issues while living in a family with two parents.

The happiness and overall well-being of a child has a parallel dependence on the interaction between parents. A child at a conscious age and after the divorce has a higher risk to suffer from depression and behavioral issues compared to a child from a family with two parents because of the accompanying consequences of a divorce: splitting, losing a sense of detachment, and deciding upon the question about whom a child will stay with (Usakli 260). As a result of emotional trauma, a child can be exposed to the risk of developing psychiatric disorders, having suicidal thoughts, and striving for self-harm (Usakli 260). Deteriorated academic performance is one of the most notable adverse impacts of single parenting on a child, and the explanation of this situation is that a child “does not receive adequate supervision during after-school hours” (Sylvestre and Paez 23). Inadequate supervision is a logical consequence of the situation in which a custodial parent should work more, yet there is a threat that a child will grow in poverty and this will continue in his or her adulthood.

Conducted studies established an empirical understanding that single parenting has adverse effects on a child; nonetheless, Dominic Schmuck argues that many researchers do not include the variable responsible for traumatizing incidents before and during the divorce. My literature review reveals that a child from a single-parent family does not have differences in self-esteem and social relationships compared to a child from a “normal” family (Schmuck 118).

Apart from that, the negative impact of single parenting significantly depends on the parents' relationship after the divorce, and a child might not notice changes in the family structure if parents manage to agree on legal and family nuances (Schmuck 120). Advocates of negative impacts of single parenting use stress theory to describe that single parents face many responsibilities they ought to have. However, the theory has flaws related to parental warmth: for instance, a single mother expresses more warmth to a child compared to dual-parents (Schmuck 121). In addition to that, an issue of decreased academic performance could be solved if teachers are aware of a child's situation or a school has additional courses aimed at helping children experiencing inadequate adult supervision.

Many people believe that single parenting has negative impacts on a child, and their assumption should not be considered as an inaccurate one, because of divorce's "side effects." A child experiences separation from one of his or her parents, and there is less attention from a custodial parent due to the necessity to ensure financial well-being. A child is deprived of supervision, which leads to the higher possibility of being involved in dangerous activities; this situation also influences academic performance and the overall emotional condition (suicidal thoughts and depression as a few examples). Nonetheless, it is essential to remember that the effects of single parenting depend on the divorce process itself and the relationships between parents, which might be unhealthy, even under the condition of dual parenting. A single-parent family could have favorable factors for a child's well-being if a parent is willing to pay attention to the child's problems and emotional demands. Besides, considering the fact that many dual-parent families continue existing because of a child, such a situation creates the same emotional and psychological stressors with identical detrimental impacts.

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