



BSc of Psychology
Department of Psychology

The Effects of Parental Divorce on Self-
Esteem, Anger, Substance Use and Family
Aspects among Young People

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Foreword

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the BSc Psychology degree, Reykjavik University, this thesis is presented in the style of an article for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

This thesis was completed in the Spring of 2021 and may therefore have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The thesis and its findings should be viewed in light of that.

Abstract

The prevalence of divorce has increased in recent decades, but it can negatively affect children's well-being and behavior. The aim of this cross-sectional study was to examine the effects of parental divorce on self-esteem, anger, daily cigarette smoking, lifetime drunkenness, drug use, parental support, and parental monitoring among young people. The data came from The Youth in Iceland 2016 survey which was conducted by Icelandic Centre for Social Research and Analysis. There were 10,717 valid responses from high school students collected in the Youth in Iceland 2016 survey, with a response rate of 71%. A simple random sample was used for this study, consisting of 2,165 participants, 1,058 (48.9%) males and 1,071 (49.5%) females, ranging from 15 to 21 years of age. The results showed that participants from divorced families reported lower self-esteem, received less parental support, less parental monitoring, and reported more anger, daily cigarette smoking, lifetime drunkenness and drug use than participants from non-divorced families. Linear regression showed that parental monitoring mediated the effects of parental divorce on daily cigarette smoking, lifetime drunkenness and drug use. In addition, parental support mediated the effects of parental divorce on self-esteem and anger. This study showed the importance of parental support and monitoring on self-esteem, anger, daily cigarette use, lifetime drunkenness, and drug use among young people who had experienced parental divorce.

Keywords: Parental divorce, self-esteem, anger, daily cigarette smoking, lifetime drunkenness, drug use, parental support, parental monitoring, young people

Útdráttur

Algengi skilnaðar hefur aukist undanfarna áratugi, en skilnaður getur haft neikvæð áhrif á andlega heilsu og hegðun barna. Markmið þessarar þversniðsrannsóknar var að skoða áhrif skilnaðar foreldra á sjálfsvirðingu, reiði, daglegar reykingar, ölvunar, vímuefnanotkunar, stuðnings foreldra og eftirlit foreldra meðal ungs fólks. Gögnin sem notuð voru í þessari rannsókn voru frá spurningarkönnunni Ungt fólk 2016 sem framkvæmt var af Rannsókn & Greiningu. Það fengust 10.717 gild svör frá framhaldsskólanemum með 71% svarhlutfalli. Einfalt slembiúrtak var notað í þessari rannsókn, sem samanstóð af 2.165 þátttakendum, 1.058 körlum (48.9%) og 1.071 (49.5%) konum, á aldrinum 15 til 21 árs. Niðurstöður sýndu að þátttakendur sem áttu foreldra sem höfðu skilið greindu frá lægri sjálfsvirðingu, fengu minni stuðning og eftirlit frá foreldrum, greindu frá meiri reiði, daglegum reykingum, ölvun og vímuefnanotkun en þátttakendur sem áttu foreldra sem höfðu ekki skilið. Línuleg aðhvarfsgreining sýndi að eftirlit foreldra var miðlunarbreyta milli skilnað foreldra og reykinga, ölvunar og vímuefnanotkunar. Að auki, var stuðningur foreldra miðlunarbreyta milli skilnaða foreldra og sjálfsvirðingar annars vegar og reiði hins vegar. Þessi rannsókn sýndi fram á mikilvægi stuðnings og eftirlit foreldra á sjálfsvirðingu, reiði, reykingar, ölvunar og vímuefnanotkunar meðal ungs fólks sem áttu frásilda foreldra.

Lykilorð: Skilnaður foreldra, sjálfsvirðing, reiði, reykingar, ölvun, vímuefnanotkun, stuðningur foreldra, eftirlit foreldra, ungt fólk

The Effects of Parental Divorce on Self-Esteem, Anger, Substance Use and Family Aspects among Young people

Divorce is common in our society. Therefore, many studies have observed the prevalence and consequences of divorce for several decades (Størksen et al., 2006). In APA dictionary of psychology divorce is defined as “The legal dissolution of marriage, leaving the partners free to remarry” (VandenBos, 2015, p. 328). Although divorce rate is higher in the United States than in Europe, research has shown that divorce rate is increasing in Europe (Amato & James, 2010). In the United States, one out of two marriages end in a divorce compared to 40% of marriages in Europe (Sheykhi, 2020). In the Nordic countries, 47% of marriages in Norway and Denmark, 53% in Sweden and around 40% of marriages in Iceland end in a divorce (Hagstofa Íslands, 2005). Fagan and Churchill (2012) reported that every given year over one million children in the United States experience parental divorce. Johnson and Nelson (1998) stated that between 25% and 35% of college students have parents who have gone through a divorce.

Although divorce can be a relief for one person and a major setback for another (Ármannsdóttir et al., 2014), both individuals are likely to experience depression and poor mental health following the divorce (Fincham & Beach, 1999) which can negatively affect their children’s mental health (Størksen et al., 2006).

Studies have shown that parental divorce can negatively affect children’s self-esteem (Palosaari et al., 1996). Bynum and Durm (1996) found that 15% of children in the divorced group reported lower self-esteem, compared to 7% in the non-divorced group. Similar results were found by Goodman and Pickens (2001), but in addition results showed that the difference was greater for girls than for boys. However, results indicated that over time, self-esteem recovered among students with divorced parents. Palosaari et al. (1996) examined self-esteem and depression in adolescents who had experienced parental divorce in childhood. The results showed that girls in divorced families had lower self-esteem compared

to girls in non-divorced families. However, there was not a significant difference between boys in non-divorced families and divorced families. The results also showed that symptoms of depression were frequently found in children who had experienced parental divorce. Similar results were found by Størksen et al. (2005), but in addition results showed that adolescents from divorced families had more school problems and anxiety than adolescents from non-divorced families. Furthermore, results showed that the effect of divorce on self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and school problems was associated with father absence.

Mahon et al. (2003) argued that there was no difference in anxiety and depression symptoms between early adolescents in divorced families and non-divorced families. However, they reported a difference in anger between the two groups, as early adolescents with divorced parents showed higher levels of anger compared to early adolescents from non-divorced families but according to Novaco (1986), anger can be a way to reduce stress. Both during and after the parental divorce, individuals can experience feelings of anger (Wallerstein et al., 2000). A study by Hamama and Ronen-Shenhav (2012) showed that adolescents from divorced families reported higher levels of aggression than individuals from non-divorced families. Similarly, Short (1998) found that children who had experienced parental divorce showed more aggressive behaviors than those in non-divorced families. Moreover, results also showed that individuals in divorced families were more likely to engage in substance use than those in non-divorced families. Felitti et al. (1998) argued that substance use is a coping mechanism, used in order to relieve emotions such as anger and frustration.

A study by Gustavsen et al. (2016) showed that adolescents in divorced families were 10% more likely to consume alcohol and tobacco than individuals from non-divorced families. However, they found that parental divorce had a little effect on drug use. Similar results were found by Ledoux et al. (2002), however their results showed that adolescents

from divorced families were more likely to use drugs than adolescents from non-divorced families. Donovan and Molina (2011) reported that adolescents in divorced families start drinking alcohol earlier compared to adolescents from non-divorced families. According to Kuntsche and Kuendig (2006) adolescents in divorced families also reported heavier drinking and higher prevalence of drunkenness. In addition, they found that adolescents who grew up with one parent spend less time with their family and were at greater risk of spending time with peers who drink alcohol. Huurre et al. (2010) showed that individuals who experienced divorce in their childhood develop heavier use of alcohol in adulthood, which can develop into a life-time abuse. In addition, their results showed that individuals in divorced families reported more alcohol use than those in non-divorced families. Kristjansson et al. (2009) found that girls in divorced families were at a higher risk of smoking and alcohol use than boys. However, parental monitoring was found to be a protective factor for alcohol consumption and smoking among adolescents.

Low parental support (Heimisdottir et al., 2010), low parental monitoring (Ledoux et al., 2002), and poorer parent-child relationship (Freeman & Newland, 2002) are examples of factors that can increase the likelihood of drunkenness among adolescents. For children and adolescents, parental divorce can be a major challenge and stressful experience (Guidubaldi & Perry, 1985), which can lead to decreased standards of living and reduced time (Amato & Keith, 1991) and contact with parents (Emery et al., 2011).

A meta-analysis by Kunz (2001) showed that interpersonal relationship is less positive with mother, father and family among children who have experienced parental divorce than children from non-divorced families. Studies have found that individuals from divorced families experience less parental care (Schaan et al., 2019), less warmth (Emery et al., 2011), lack of support (Amato, 2000), lack of parental involvement, and monitoring from their parents (Demuth & Brown, 2004), all of which negatively affects children's mental

health (Schaan & Vögele, 2016). In addition, Bastaits and Mortelmans (2016) found that support from father and mother after the divorce had a positive effect on the well-being of children.

To summarize, studies have suggested that experiencing parental divorce can lead to lower self-esteem (Goodman & Pickens, 2001), anger (Mahon et al., 2003), alcohol use (Huurre et al., 2010), cigarette use (Kristjansson et al., 2009), drug use (Ledoux et al., 2002), less parental support (Amato, 2000), and less parental monitoring (Demuth & Brown, 2004) among the children involved. As all these findings highlight the severity of distress caused by parental divorce. Therefore, it is important to continue to further examine the effect of parental divorce on children and investigate potential mediating variables.

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of parental divorce on young people. The hypotheses is that young people from divorced families report lower self-esteem, receive less parental support, lower parental monitoring and report more anger, daily cigarette smoking, lifetime drunkenness and drug use than participants from non-divorced families. In addition, two research questions regarding mediators are put forward: Does parental monitoring mediate the effect of parental divorce on daily cigarette smoking, lifetime drunkenness and drug use? and Does parental support mediate the effect of parental divorce on self-esteem and anger?

Method

Participants

The data in this study came from a population-based survey, Youth in Iceland 2016, which was conducted in every high school in Iceland (Pálsdóttir et al., 2016). There were 10.717 valid responses from the students in the survey with a response rate of 71%. In this study, a simple random sample from the Youth in Iceland 2016 data was used, consisting of 2.165 participants. The gender ratio was about equal in the sample, males were 1.058

(48.9%), females were 1.071 (49.5%), and 36 (1.7%) participants did not provide their gender information. Participant age ranged from 15 to 21 years ($M = 17.4$, $SD = 1.3$). Most participants were 16 years old (30.1%), 17 years old (25.9%), 18 years old (23.2%), and 19 years old (15.3%). A minority of participants were 15 years old (0.5%), 20 years old (3.5%), and 21 years old (1.6%). Most participants were on their first semester (28.8%). Of those who had completed a semester in high school, most participants had completed two semesters (23%), four semesters (18.6%), and six semesters (12.1%). Few participants had completed one semester (3.2%), three semesters (3.8%), five semesters (4.3%), seven semesters (2.7%), eight semester (2.2%), and more than eight semesters (1.3%).

Measurements

Icelandic Centre for Social Research and Analysis (ICSRA), which carries out research among young Icelandic students in elementary and high schools every few years, conducted the data collection (Pálsdóttir et al., 2016). The Youth in Iceland Survey 2016 contained 85 questions with 470 items on 32 pages. The survey included a variety of questions concerning physical and mental health, attitudes, family circumstances, and academic achievements.

In this study, seven dependent variables were used which included questions regarding parental support, parental monitoring, self-esteem, anger, daily cigarette smoking, lifetime drunkenness and drug use. One independent variable was used in this study, parental divorce.

Parental Divorce

Participants were asked the question “Has any of the following happend to you?” followed by the statement “*Your parents divorced or separated*” (See all the questions used in Appendix A). The answer options were “*Yes, in the last 30 days*”, “*Yes, in the last 12*

months”, “*Yes, for more than 12 months*”, and, “*No*”. The response from the question was computed into two groups, non-divorced families = 0 and divorced families = 1.

Parental Support

The Perceived Parental Support (PPS) scale (Kristjansson et al., 2011), was used in this study and included five items, for example, about how easy or hard it was to get care, warmth, and advice from parents, on a four-point ordinal scale (1 = *very difficult* to 4 = *very easy*). All four questions pertaining to parental support were computed into one variable before the statistical analysis was performed. The scale ranged from 1 to 4, with higher values representing more parental support. The PPS was reliable, as the Cronbach’s α was .89 in this study. Similarly, in study by Kristjansson et al. (2011), where support from parents was measured in various countries in Europe, the Cronbach’s α was from .77 to .87.

Parental Monitoring

Four questions were applied to measure parental monitoring by asking participants: “How well do the following statements apply to you?”: (1) My parents follow who I am socializing with in the evenings, (2) My parents know where I am in the evenings, (3) My parents know my friends, (4) My parents know the parents of my friends. The four questions were on four-point ordinal scale (1 = *Applies wery poorly to me* to 4 = *Applies very well to me*) and was computed into one variable before the statistical analysis was performed. The parental monitoring scale was considered reliable, as the Cronbach’s α was .78 in this study.

Self-Esteem

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE, Rosenberg, 1965) was used in this study by asking participants the following: “How well do you think the following statements applies to you?” followed by items regarding feelings of inferiority, self-confidence, believe and qualities towards self. The questions were on four-point ordinal scale (1 = *Applies wery poorly to me* to 4 = *Applies very well to me*). Five questions in the RSE were reversed and,

therefore, higher values represent more self-esteem. After recoding the five reversed items, all 10 items pertaining to self-esteem were computed into one variable before the statistical analysis was performed. The RSE was reliable, as the Cronbach's α was .91 in this study. Similarly, in study by Asgeirsdottir et al. (2010) the reliability was .90.

Anger

Anger was measured with items of the symptom's checklist (SCL-90-R) (Asgeirsdottir et al., 2011) by asking participants the following: "How often have you experienced the following discomfort in the last 30 days?" followed by five items, for example, "Easily annoyed or irritated", "Got into arguments" and "Shouted or threw things". The questions were on a four-point ordinal scale (1 = *Almost never* to 4 = *Often*) and was computed into one variable before the statistical analysis was performed. The scale ranged from 1 to 4, with higher values representing more anger. The anger measurement scale was reliable, as the Cronbach's α was .82. Likewise, in study by Asgeirsdottir et al. (2011) the reliability was .82.

Substance Use

Three questions were used to measure substance use. Participants were asked "How often in your lifetime have you got drunk?", and "How many cigarettes have you smoked during the last 30 days?". In addition, participants were asked how often they had used drugs in their lifetime, for example, LSD, MDMA and marijuana. All 14 items regarding drug use were computed into one variable before the statistical analysis was performed. The drug use scale was reliable, as the Cronbach's α was .82. The answer options for both lifetime drunkenness and drug use were "*Never*", "*1-2 times*", "*3-5 times*", "*6-9 times*", "*10-19 times*", "*20-39 times*" and "*40 times or more*". Regarding daily cigarette smoking, the answer options were from "*None*" to "*More than 20 cigarettes per day*".

Procedure

This cross-sectional survey was conducted by ICSRA and the data was from The Youth in Iceland 2016 survey (Pálsdóttir et al., 2016). Questionnaires were printed out and sent to all high schools in Iceland in the fall of 2016. The teachers handed out the survey in class to all students present at the time the survey was conducted. A week before the data collection, a letter was sent to parents of students under the age of 18, therefore, informed consent was requested for the survey. Participants were asked to read the survey instructions before answering the questions. The instructions included information regarding confidentiality, where participants were reminded not to write their name or ID number, the time length of the survey and how the questions should be marked. Participants were asked to answer all questions conscientiously and if they had any questions regarding the survey, they could turn to the teachers for help, as teachers received information about the survey, implementation and submission before the survey was submitted. The estimated response time was about an hour. After completing the survey, participants placed the survey in a closed envelope and handed to their teacher.

Data Analysis

SPSS (27th edition) was used to process and analyze the data. Chi-square tests were used to examine gender and age differences in having experienced parental divorce and non-parental divorce. Independent sample t-tests were used to examine differences in substance use and dependent variables relating to self-esteem and anger between young people in divorced families and non-divorced families. Levene's tests for equality of variances were significant in all cases, $p < .001$, therefore assumption of equal variances can not be assumed, and the degrees of freedom was corrected to reflect unequal variances. In the study, alpha levels below .05 were considered significant.

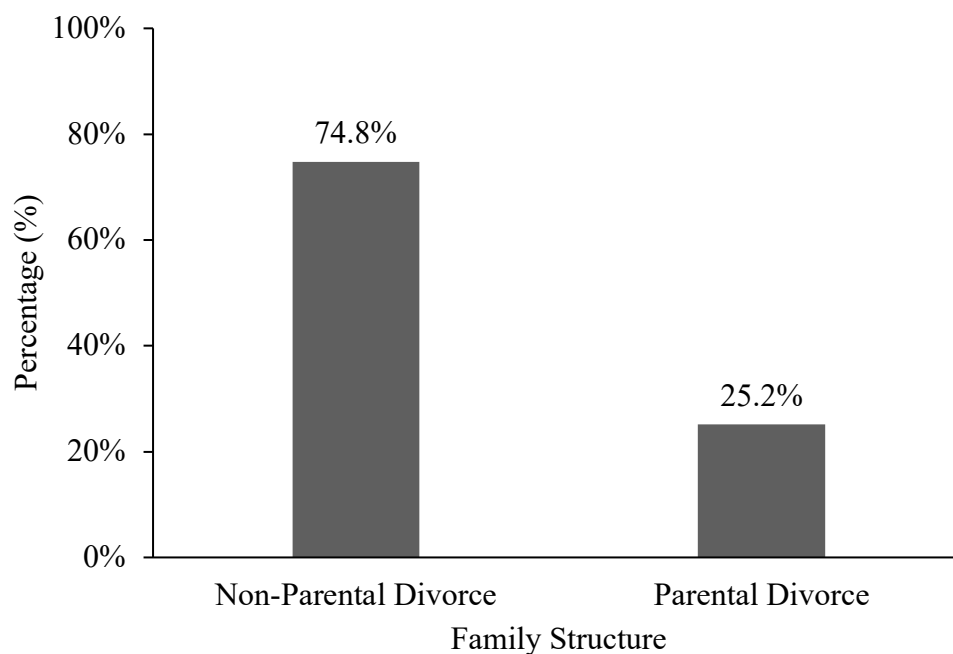
Linear regression analyses were performed to build mediational models, to examine the direct and indirect effect from parental divorce on the dependent variables in this study. According to Durbin-Watson and Tolerance values, the assumptions for no autocorrelation and the absence of multicollinearity was met in all the linear regression analyses performed in this study. PROCESS macro version 3 was used to examine whether indirect effects (Hayes, 2018), using, Sobel tests to examine whether the mediators were significant (Preacher & Leonardelli, 2021).

Results

In total, 2.163 participants answered the question regarding parental divorce, 1.057 (49.7%) of whom were male, and 1.070 (50.3%) female. As shown in Figure 1, majority of participants in the study had not experienced parental divorce.

Figure 1

Number of Participants Who Had Either Experienced Parental Divorce or not



As shown in Figure 1, about 74.8% of participants ($N = 1.618$), had not experienced parental divorce and about 25.2% had experienced parental divorce ($N = 545$). Of males,

24.8% ($N = 262$) were from divorced families and 75.2% ($N = 795$) males were from non-divorced families. Of females, 24.3% ($N = 260$) were from divorced families and 75.7% ($n = 810$) females were from non-divorced families. There was not a significant difference between genders in terms of the frequency of parental divorce and non-parental divorce ($\chi^2(1) = 0.07, p = .794$).

As Table 1 shows, the age group 15 years old, 20 years old, and 21 years old had the highest parental divorce rate.

Table 1

Age Ratio of Participants from Non-Divorced Families and Divorced Families

| Age | Non-Parental Divorce | Parental Divorce |
|--------------|----------------------|------------------|
| 15 years old | 50.0% | 50.0% |
| 16 years old | 79.1% | 20.9% |
| 17 years old | 75.2% | 24.8% |
| 18 years old | 76.1% | 23.9% |
| 19 years old | 76.1% | 23.9% |
| 20 years old | 69.0% | 31.0% |
| 21 years old | 59.4% | 40.6% |

Furthermore, Table 1 shows that participants aged 16 to 19 years old had the lowest parental divorce rate. There was a significant difference regarding participants age in terms of parental divorce and non-parental divorce ($\chi^2(7) = 13.82, p = .03$).

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for each variable in the study. Most participants in the study reported high parental support ($M = 3.5$), parental monitoring ($M = 3.1$), and self-esteem ($M = 3.1$). Participants had rarely felt angry in the last thirty days ($M = 1.8$). On average, participants reported that they had been drunk 17.7 times over lifetime, had 0.6

cigarettes per day and taken drugs 0.8 times in their lifetime. The correlation analysis revealed that experiencing parental divorce was associated with the experience of receiving less support and less monitoring from parents. Parental divorce was associated with decreased self-esteem. Parental divorce was associated with increased anger, lifetime drunkenness, daily cigarette smoking, and drug use. Indicating that experiencing parental divorce increased the likelihood of anger, lifetime drunkenness, daily cigarette smoking and drug use.

Table 2

Number, Mean, Standard Deviation, Min, Max, and Bivariate Correlation for Variables in the Study

| Variable | <i>N</i> | min | max | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | Correlation | | | | | | |
|----------------|----------|-----|-----|----------|-----------|-------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | | | | | | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 1. PD | 2.163 | 0 | 1 | 0.3 | 0.4 | -.16 | -.18 | -.11 | .11 | .09 | .09 | .11 |
| 2. PS | 2.083 | 1 | 4 | 3.5 | 0.6 | - | .35 | .33 | -.19 | -.08 | -.16 | -.15 |
| 3. PM | 1.904 | 1 | 4 | 3.1 | 0.7 | | - | .13 | -.11 | -.30 | -.17 | -.26 |
| 4. Self-Esteem | 2.005 | 1 | 4 | 3.1 | 0.7 | | | - | -.39 | -.05 | .07 | .09 |
| 5. Anger | 2.077 | 1 | 4 | 1.8 | 0.7 | | | | - | .11 | .11 | .12 |
| 6. Drunkenness | 2.092 | 0 | 60 | 17.7 | 23.2 | | | | | - | .29 | .41 |
| 7. Smoking | 2.085 | 0 | 22 | 0.6 | 25.9 | | | | | | - | .39 |
| 8. Drugs | 2.047 | 0 | 60 | 0.8 | 2.9 | | | | | | | - |

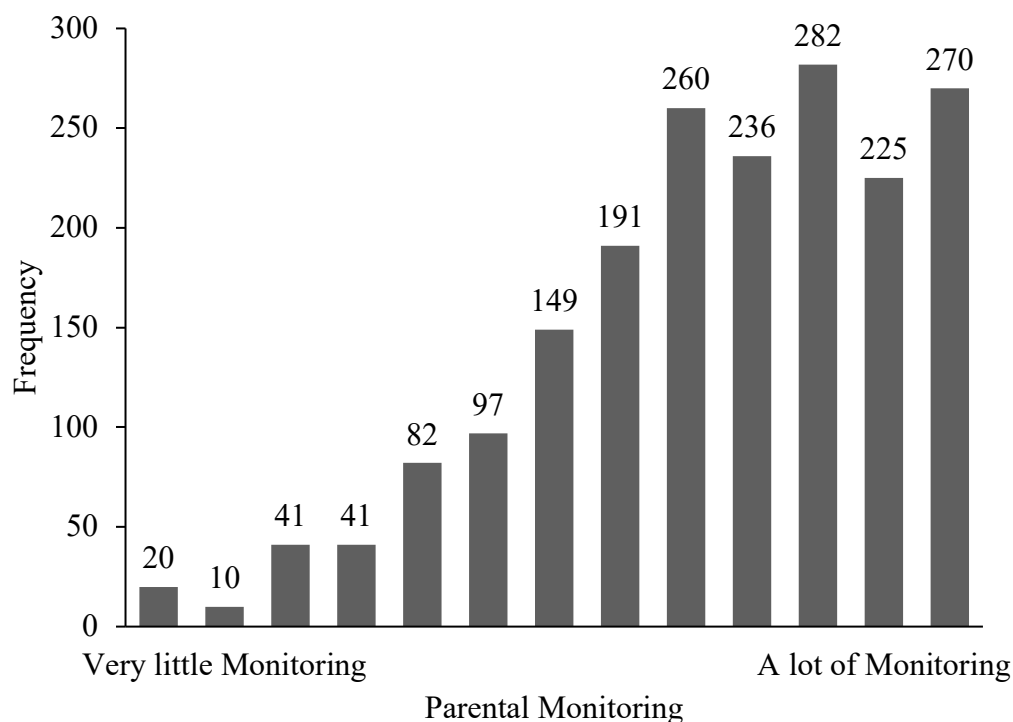
Note. All correlations significant at the .01 level. PD = Parental Divorce, PS = Parental Support, PM = Parental Monitoring.

As the correlation analysis shows in Table 2, increased parental support was associated with increased parental monitoring. Increased parental support was associated with increase in self-esteem and decrease in anger. Increased parental monitoring was also associated with a decrease in lifetime drunkenness, daily cigarette smoking, and drug use. In addition, increase in lifetime drunkenness and daily cigarette smoking were associated with increased likelihood of using drugs.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of parental monitoring in the study, as can be seen the distribution is negatively skewed, as most participants reported high parental monitoring in the survey.

Figure 2

Distribution in Parental Monitoring



As Figure 2 shows, few participants or 1.1%, reported that their parents didn't follow who they socialize with, where they are in the evenings, didn't know their friends or the parents of their friends. However, 12.5% participants received the highest possible score in parental monitoring, indicating that their parents followed who they socialize with, where they are in the evenings, knew their friends and the parents of their friends.

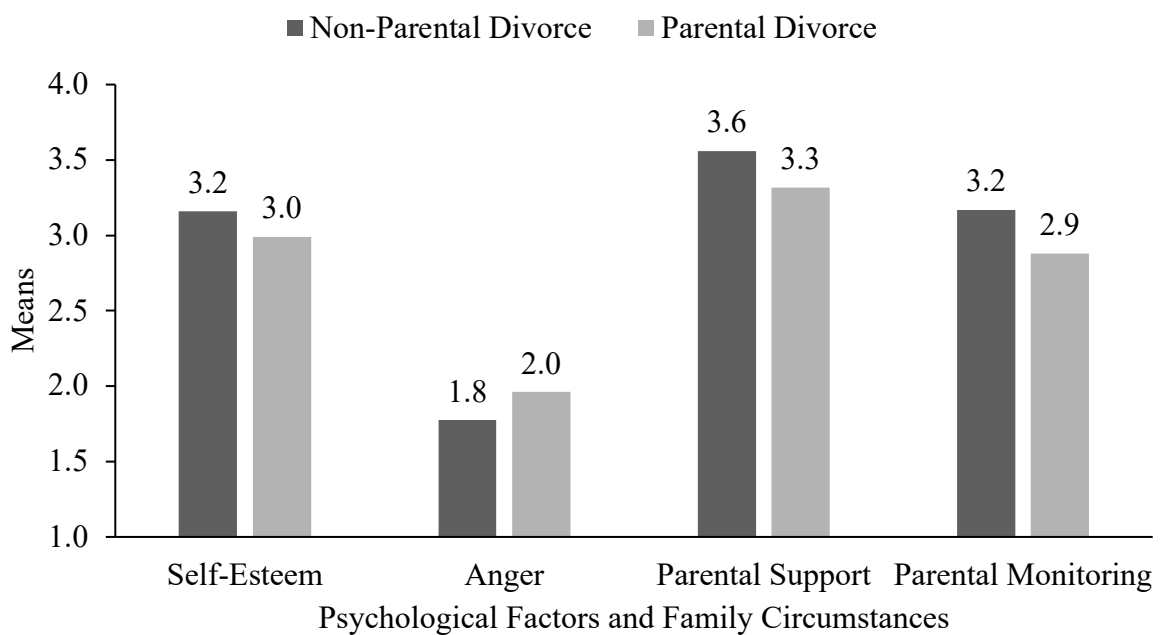
Comparison of Participants from Divorced Families and Non-Divorced Families

Independent sample t-tests were used to measure the difference between those who had experienced parental divorce and those who had not.

As Figure 3 shows, on average, participants who had experienced parental divorce reported lower self-esteem ($M = 3.0$, $SD = 0.7$) than those from non-divorced families ($M = 3.2$, $SD = 0.6$, $t(692) = 4.58$, $p < .001$).

Figure 3

Comparison of Participants from Divorced Families and Non-Divorced Families Regarding Self-esteem, Anger and Family Circumstances

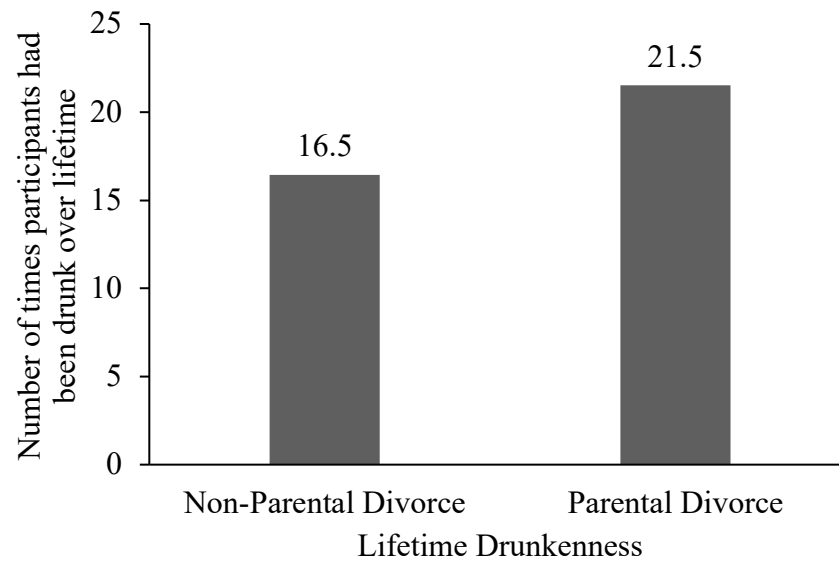


As shown in Figure 3, participants from divorced families also reported higher levels of anger ($M = 2.0$, $SD = 0.8$) than those from non-divorced families ($M = 1.8$, $SD = 0.7$, $t(729.5) = -4.79$, $p < .001$). Participants from non-divorced families received more parental support ($M = 3.6$, $SD = 0.6$) than those who had experienced parental divorce ($M = 3.3$, $SD = 0.7$, $t(694) = 6.59$, $p < .001$). In addition, participants from non-divorced families reported more parental monitoring ($M = 3.2$, $SD = 0.7$) than participants from divorced families ($M = 2.9$, $SD = 0.7$, $t(660) = 7.37$, $p < .001$).

As Table 4 shows, participants from divorced families reported more lifetime drunkenness ($M = 21.5$, $SD = 24.6$) compared to participants from non-divorced families ($M = 16.5$, $SD = 22.6$, $t(769) = -4.08$, $p < .001$).

Figure 4

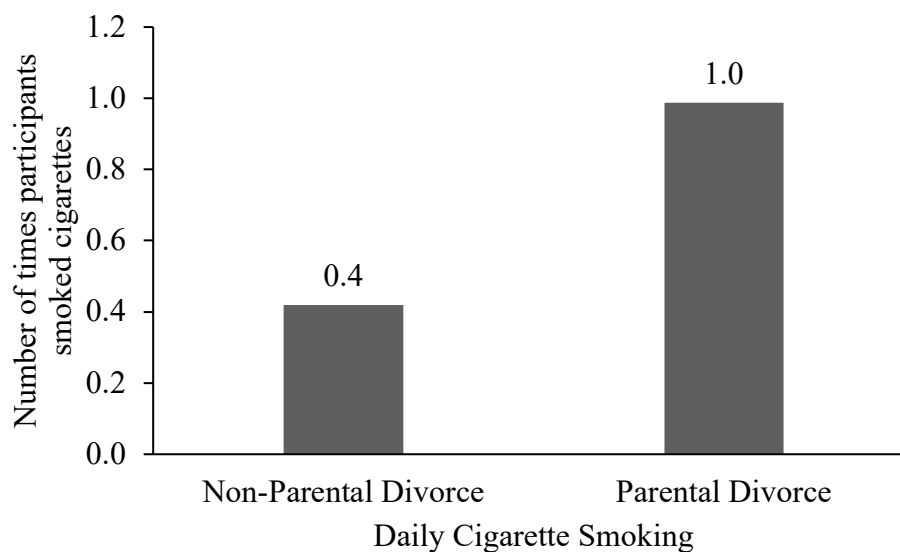
Comparison of Participants from Divorced Families and Non-Divorced Families Regarding Lifetime Drunkenness



As shown in Figure 5, participants from divorced families reported higher average number of cigarettes smoked daily ($M = 1.0$, $SD = 3.5$) than participants from non-divorced families ($M = 0.4$, $SD = 2.2$, $t(621) = -3.43$, $p < .001$).

Figure 5

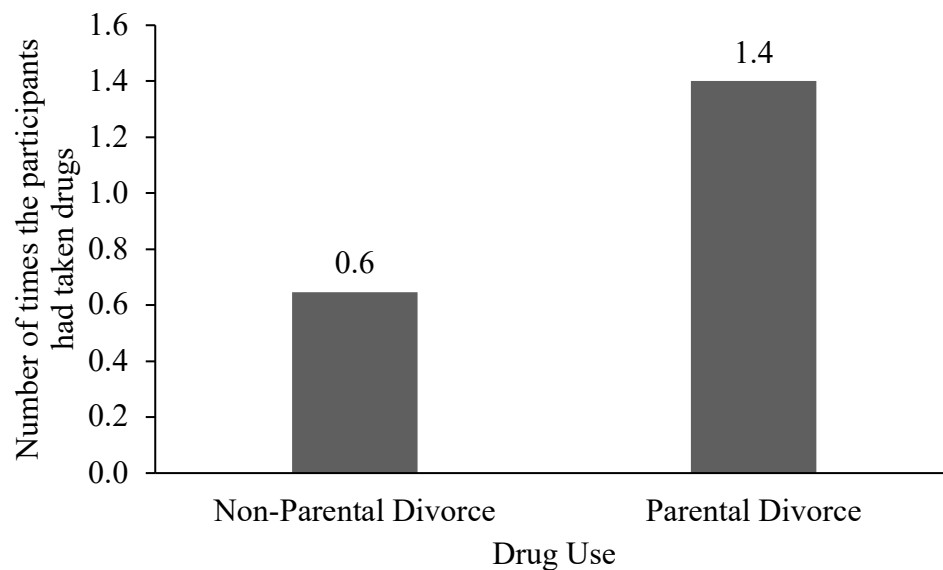
Comparison of Participants from Divorced Families and Non-Divorced Families Regarding Daily Cigarette Smoking



As Figure 6 shows participants from divorced families reported more drug use ($M = 1.4$, $SD = 4.0$) than those from non-divorced families ($M = 0.6$, $SD = 2.4$, $t(588) = -3.94$, $p < .001$).

Figure 6

Comparison of Participants from Divorced Families and Non-Divorced Families Regarding Drug Use



The Effects of Parental Divorce on Daily Cigarette Smoking, Lifetime Drunkenness and Drug Use

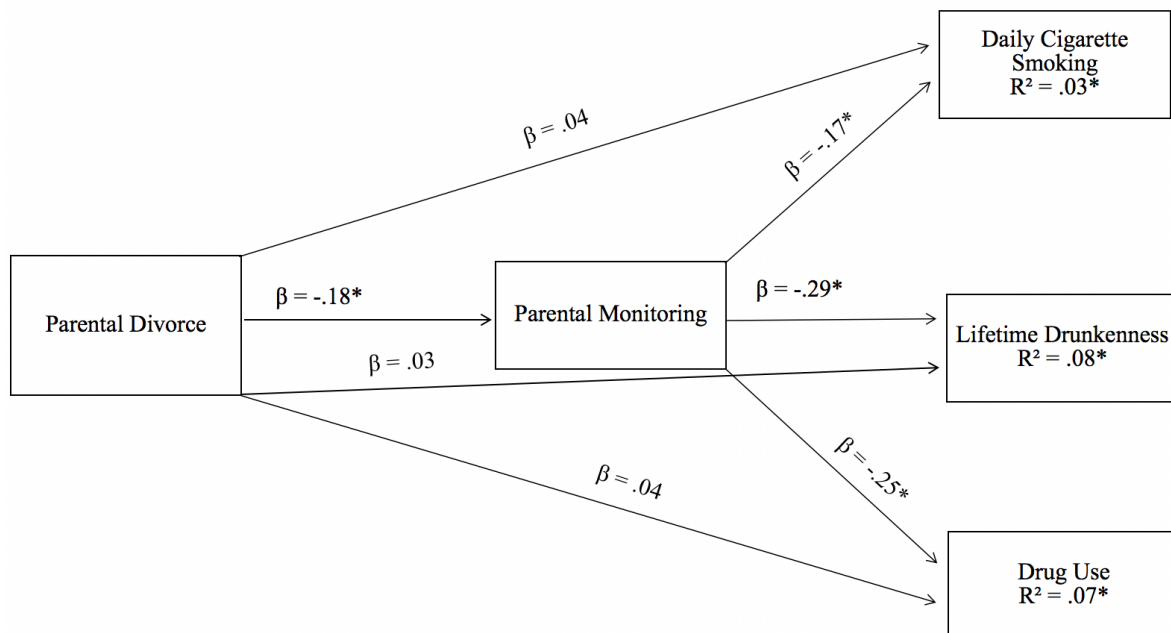
Four linear regression analyses¹ were performed to examine the effects of parental divorce on substance use among young people, with parental monitoring as a mediator (non-divorced families = 0, divorced families = 1).

As shown in Figure 7, parental divorce and parental monitoring explained statistically 3% in daily cigarette smoking, 8% in lifetime drunkenness, and 7% in drug use.

¹ Linear Regression analyses were performed examining the effect of parental divorce on parental monitoring. Furthermore, the effects of parental divorce and parental monitoring on three outcome variables (daily cigarette smoking, lifetime drunkenness and drug use) were examined. In addition, PROCESS macro and sobel test were performed to examine if the indirect effect were significant.

Figure 7

A Linear Regression Mediation Model, with Parental Monitoring as Mediator



Note. * $p < .05$

As shown in Figure 7, parental divorce was significantly associated with less parental monitoring. Parental divorce did not have a significant direct effect on daily cigarette smoking, lifetime drunkenness, and drug use. However, increased parental monitoring was significantly associated with a decrease in daily cigarette smoking, lifetime drunkenness, and drug use.

Parental divorce had significant indirect effects on all substance use variables, being associated with indirectly increasing daily cigarette smoking, $b = 0.15$, BCa CI [0.08, 0.22] ($Z = 6.72, p < .001$), lifetime drunkenness, $b = 2.80$, BCa CI [1.94, 3.70] ($Z = 6.72, p < .001$), and drug use $b = 0.28$, BCa CI [0.19, 0.40] ($Z = 6.39, p < .001$) through parental monitoring. Indicating that parental divorce indirectly increased daily cigarette smoking, lifetime drunkenness and drug use by decreasing parental monitoring.

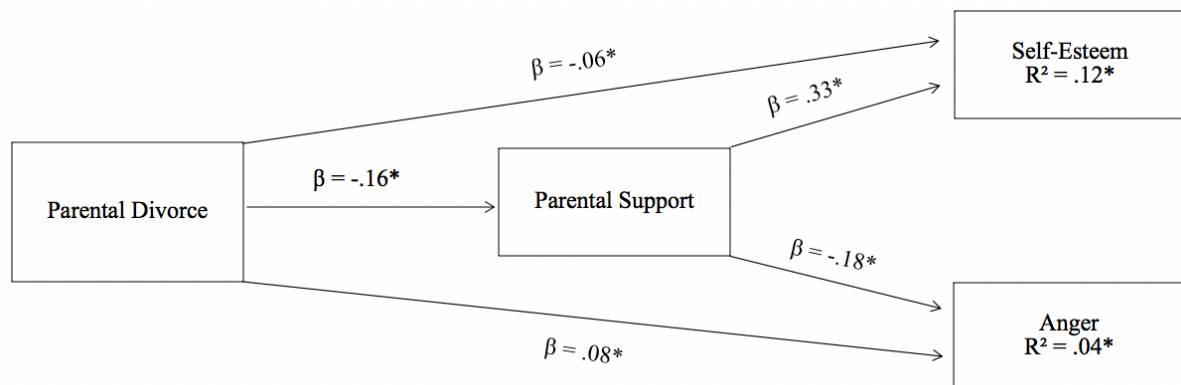
The Effects of Parental Divorce on Self-Esteem and Anger

Three linear regressions² were performed to examine the effect of parental divorce on participants self-esteem and anger, with parental support as a mediator.

As shown in Figure 8, parental divorce and parental support explained statistically 12% in participants self-esteem and 4% in anger.

Figure 8

A Linear Regression Mediation Model, with Parental Support as Mediator



Note. * $p < .05$

Figure 8 shows that parental divorce was significantly associated with less parental support. In addition, parental divorce did have a decreasing direct effect on self-esteem and an increasing direct effect on anger, although the relations were not strong. Parental support had a significant increasing direct effect on self-esteem and a significant decreasing direct effect on anger. Parental divorce had a significant indirect effect on self-esteem, $b = -0.08$, BCa CI [-0.11, -0.05] ($Z = -6.57, p < .001$), and anger, $b = 0.05$, BCa CI [0.03, 0.07] ($Z =$

² Linear Regression analyses were performed examining the effect of parental divorce on parental support. Furthermore, the effect of parental divorce and parental support on two outcome variables (self-esteem and anger) were examined. In addition, PROCESS macro and sobel test were performed to examine if the indirect effect were significant.

5.43, $p < .001$), through parental support, indicating that parental divorce indirectly reduced self-esteem and increased anger by decreasing parental support.

Discussion

The study aimed to examine the effects of parental divorce on young people. The hypothesis that participants from divorced families report lower self-esteem than participants from non-divorced families was supported. These findings are consistent to previous studies, as participants from non-divorced families reported significantly higher self-esteem than participants from divorced families (Bynum & Drum, 1996).

The hypotheses that participants from divorced families would receive less support and monitoring from parents than participants from non-divorced families was supported. These findings are consistent with previous studies, as participants from non-divorced families reported significantly higher parental monitoring (Demuth & Brown, 2004) and parental support (Amato, 2000). As Emery et al. (2011) indicated, children can lose contact with one of their parents, which is one possible reason for receiving less support and monitoring.

The hypothesis that more anger would be reported by participants from divorced families than participants from non-divorced families was supported. These findings are consistent with Mahon et al. (2003), as adolescents from divorced families reported more anger than participants from non-divorced families.

The hypotheses that participants from divorced families would report more daily cigarette smoking, lifetime drunkenness and drug use than participants from non-divorced families were supported. These findings are consistent to previous studies, as studies have found that young people from divorced families were more likely to smoke (Gustavsen et al., 2016), had higher prevalence of drunkenness (Kuntsche & Kuendig, 2006), and used more drugs (Ledoux et al., 2002) than young people from non-divorced families.

Parental divorce did not have a direct effect on daily cigarette smoking, lifetime drunkenness and drug use among participants. These findings are similar to a study by Gustavsen et al. (2016), as their results showed that parental divorce had little effect on drug use. However, parental divorce did have decreasing effect on parental monitoring, which then had direct decreasing effects on daily cigarette smoking, lifetime drunkenness and drug use. Results supported that parental monitoring significantly mediated the effect of parental divorce on daily cigarette smoking, lifetime drunkenness and drug use. Similarly, Kristjansson et al. (2009) found that parental monitoring was a protective factor for substance use among participants from divorced families. Hence, research suggests that parental divorce can increase the likelihood of substance use due to less parental monitoring.

Although direct effects of parental divorce on participants self-esteem and anger were small, parental divorce had a substantial decreasing direct effect on parental support, which was associated with higher self-esteem and less anger among participants. Results supported that parental support significantly mediated the effect of parental divorce on self-esteem and anger. Therefore, parental divorce can have a negative effect on participants self-esteem and positive effect on participants anger due to less parental support. Similarly, Bastaitis and Mortelmans (2016) found that after the divorce, support from parents had a positive effect on children's well-being.

Increased substance use may be a way for participants from divorced families to cope with the changing circumstances that divorce may entail, as parental divorce can lead to decreased standards of living (Amato & Keith, 1991). As Kuntsche and Kuendig (2006) found, adolescents from single parent families spend less time with their family and were at higher risk of spending time with peers who drink alcohol. Furthermore Emery et al. (2011) argued that children spend more times with friends when their parents don't monitor them. This suggests that children could be more likely to be in bad company with peers who

encourage substance if parents do not know with whom their children spend their free time with. A lack of parental monitoring can lead to less rules and demands in the home, which could give the child a greater opportunity to pursue substance use.

Poor mental health among parents following the divorce could affect children's self-esteem, as studies have found that discomfort of parents can affect children mental health (Størksen et al., 2006). Wallerstein et al. (2000) indicated that individuals can experience anger after the divorce of their parents. Therefore, increased anger among participants from divorced families may be related to the changed family circumstances, as studies have shown that children from divorced families can lose contact with parents (Emery et al., 2011) or spend less time with their parents (Amato & Keith, 1991). As Guidubaldi and Perry (1985) stated, parental divorce can be a stressful experience for children. Therefore, the stress regarding parental divorce may be an explanation for anger among young people, as Novaco (1986) argued that anger can be a way to reduce stress. Parental support can be an effective mediator for self-esteem and anger because of conversations or advice from parents regarding personal issues. A lack thereof may result in problems that cause discomfort and may therefore lead to lower self-esteem and more anger. In addition, less help with school assignments could affect self-esteem, as they might get poorer grades and therefore might have less believe in themselves, as studies have found that father absence after the divorce can have negative effect on school achievements among adolescents (Størksen et al., 2005). Also, with less parental support, children may receive less advice concerning goals and demands, which can decrease self-control skills which can then result in more anger or aggression (Hamama & Ronen-Shenhav 2012).

The strengths of this study included a large representative sample, high participation rate, equal gender ratio, and the participants responses were untraceable, giving the

participants more confidence to respond reliably. Furthermore, most of the scales used in this study had a great reliability and validity (Pálsdóttir et al., 2016).

There were several limitations worth noting in current study. First, a cross-sectional data was used in this study, so no causality nor long-term effect can be known. Second, the questionnaire was long, which could reduce the item response rate. Third, parental divorce and parental support only explained statistically 12% in self-esteem and 4% in anger. Furthermore, parental divorce and parental monitoring only explained statistically 3% in smoking, 8% in lifetime drunkenness and 7% in drug use. This indicates that other variables could have important impact but were not included. Future research could examine other factors that may play an important role in the behavior and well-being of children from divorced families. For example, if stepparents increase the likelihood of greater support and monitoring. In addition, consider other family factors such as the impact of family conflict and family income on young people from divorced families. Studies could not only focus on the negative effects but also focus on the protective factors concerning parental divorce, for example, if support from siblings, peers, or stepparents is a protective factor for self-esteem, anger, or substance use among young people from divorced families.

In conclusion, the current study shed some light on the importance of family circumstances and factors among participants who had experienced parental divorce in Iceland. Reduced parental support and monitoring can negatively affect various aspects of young people's life, suggesting that parental function is important for children's well-being and behavior (Amato, 2000). The current study's results strengthen the knowledge of the consequences of less support and monitoring on children from divorced families. Parents should increase support by showing warmth, talk to their children about personal matters, and give advice regarding school task and other subject to increase self-esteem and decrease

anger. In addition, monitor their children and talk to them about the consequences of addictive substance use in order to prevent substance use.

It must be kept in mind that, as Ársmannsdóttir et al. (2014) presented, divorce can be a relief or a major setback for the individuals involved. This applies to children of divorced parents as well. Divorce does not necessarily always have negative effects on children, it could be the other way around, as children may also feel relieved, especially when there is a family conflict. However, current, and previous studies showed that parental divorce negatively affects children's well-being and behavior. By continuing to study the effects of parental divorce, we could find more and better ways to prevent serious consequences for the children involved, as parental divorce may be the first trauma they experience in their lifetime.

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Appendix

The survey questions used in this study.

1. Ert þú strákur eða stelpa?

☐ Strákur ☐ Stelpa

2. Hvaða ár ert þú fædd(ur)?

☐ 1995 ☐ 1996 ☐ 1997 ☐ 1998 ☐ 1999 ☐ 2000
☐ 2001 ☐ 2002 ☐ Annað, árið _____

3. Hversu mörgum öðrum hefur þú lokið í framhaldsskóla? Merktu aðeins í EINN reit.

| | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engri, er á fyrstu önn | <input type="checkbox"/> Fimm |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Einni | <input type="checkbox"/> Sex |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tveimur | <input type="checkbox"/> Sjö |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Premur | <input type="checkbox"/> Átta |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fjórum | <input type="checkbox"/> Fleiri _____ öðrum |

32. Hefur eitthvað af eftirfarandi komið fyrir þig? Svaraðu ÖLLUM liðum og merktu í EINN eða FLEIRI reiti eftir því sem við á.

| | Já, á síðustu 30 dögum | Já, á síðustu 12 mánuðum | Já, fyrir meira en 12 mánuðum | Nei |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| c) Foreldrar þínir skilið eða slitið sambúð | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

26. Hversu auðvelt eða erfitt væri fyrir þig að fá eftirtalið hjá FORELDNUM þínum? Merktu í EINN reit í HVERJUM lið.

| | Mjög erfitt | Frekar erfitt | Frekar auðvelt | Mjög auðvelt |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Umhyggju og hlýju | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Samræður um persónuleg málefni | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Ráðleggingar varðandi námið | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Ráðleggingar varðandi önnur verk (viðfangsefni) þín | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Aðstoð við ýmis verk | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

28. Hversu vel eiga eftirfarandi fullyrðingar við um þig? Merktu í EINN reit í HVERJUM lið.

| | Á mjög illa við um mig | Á frekar illa við um mig | Á frekar vel við um mig | Á mjög vel við um mig | Bý ekki hjá foreldrum |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Foreldrar mínir fylgjast með því með hverjum ég er á kvöldin | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Foreldrar mínir fylgjast með því hvar ég er á kvöldin | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Foreldrar mínir þekkja vini/vinkonur mína(r) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Foreldrar mínir þekkja foreldra vana/vinkvenna minna | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

29. Hversu vel finnst þér eftirfarandi staðhæfingar eiga við um þig? Merktu í EINN reit í HVERJUM lið.

| | Á mjög vel við um mig | Á frekar vel við um mig | Á frekar illa við um mig | Á mjög illa við um mig |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Mér finnst ég vera að minnsta kosti jafn mikils virði og aðrir | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Mér finnst ég hafa marga góða eiginleika | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Þegar allt kemur til alls sýnist mér ég vera misheppnaður/-heppnuð | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Ég get gert hlutina jafn vel og flestir aðrir | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Mér finnst ekki vera margt sem ég get verið stolt(ur) af | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f) Ég hef jákvæða afstöðu til sjálfs/sjálfrar mín | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g) Þegar allt kemur til alls er ég ánægð(ur) með sjálfa(n) mig | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h) Ég vildi óska að ég bæri meiri virðingu fyrir sjálfum mér | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i) Stundum finnst mér ég sannarlega vera til einskis nýt(ur) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| j) Stundum finnst mér ég einskis virði | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

31. Hversu oft varðst þú var/vör við eftirfarandi vanlíðan eða óþægindi síðastliðna 30 daga? Merktu í EINN reit í HVERJUM lið.

- | Í EINN reit í HVERJUM líð. | Nær aldrei | Sjaldan | Stundum | Ofi |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Það var auðvelt að pirra þig eða ergja | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Þú fέkkst reiðiköst sem þú gast ekki stjórnað | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Þig langaði að brjóta eða mólva hluti | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Þú lentir í rifrildi | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Þú óskaðir eða hentir hlutum | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

52. Hve oft hefur þú orðið drukkin(n)? Merktu í EINN reit í HVORUM lið.

- [illegible]

46. Hve mikið hefur þú reykt að jafnaði síðustu 30 daga? Merktu aðeins í EINN reit).

- [illegible]

54. Hve oft (ef nokkru sinni) hefur þú notað eftirtalin efni um ævina? Merktu í EINN reit í hverjum lið.

- [illegible]