

High-Conflict Divorce: Therapeutic Approaches for Children

by

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Abstract

Divorce can be a disturbing experience for people, especially children. The aim of this capstone is to establish some of the therapeutic approaches that can be used in assisting children exposed to high-conflict divorce. The capstone employs a literature review approach in achieving the overall aim. Generally, it is established that high-conflict divorce has a wide range of negative implications to children including high levels of anxiety and depression. The capstone also reveals that if these negative outcomes are not addressed, then children face a very high risk of developing even more serious psychological conditions in future. Numerous research studies have sought to establish some of the approaches that can be used in overcoming the identified challenges. These interventions include play therapy, family-focused therapy, and teaching children how to cope. A keener evaluation, however, reveals that each of these interventions has a number of inherent weaknesses that must be addressed by researchers and mental health practitioners. This identification of limitations lays the foundation for recommending actions such as putting more focus on providing the identified interventions proactively in schools and homes. In that regard, it is proposed that therapies such as play therapy and the teaching of coping skills should be made part of academic curriculum if the adverse outcomes of high-conflict divorce are to be effectively avoided.

Chapter one: introduction

Divorce is a common occurrence among married couples. According to Damota et al. (2020), the number of divorce cases has been increasing the past few decades all over the world, however, the rate appears higher in countries such as the US (40-50%) in comparison to others like India (5-7%) (Damota et al., 2020). Divorce is described as high conflict when it involves distrust, hostility and communication breakdown over an extended period of time (Moore, 2019). When a divorce is high conflict, children may be affected in various ways, such as having trouble adjusting to new environments, experiencing psychological distress, battling feelings of hatred towards a parent and experiencing the fallout from the new economic realities (Garriga & Pennoni, 2020). Current counselling approaches for children experiencing high-conflict divorce seem to be ineffective in addressing their psychological challenges. According to Shimkowski & Ledbetter (2018), in many cases, counselling seeks to address the issue of custody while ignoring the actual psychological challenges that children face in the process of a divorce. However, more focus should be put to the psychological well-being of children if their mental health is to be effectively protected.

Garriga and Pennoni's (2020) findings suggested that economic struggle is only one area of concern and that children of parents going through a divorce may also struggle to adjust, leading to numerous psychological and social challenges. In that regard, there appears to be a need to improve current interventions to reduce the suffering children might go through during a divorce. This capstone will present a detailed evaluation of different therapeutic interventions that have been used in assisting children going through high-conflict divorce avoid extremely adverse psychological outcomes. This capstone, therefore, will seek to show that therapeutic interventions such as mindfulness cognitive therapy, cognitive behavioural therapy and family-

focused therapy are effective in mitigating the adverse impacts of high-conflict divorce on the psychological development of children.

Rationale

Augsberg et al. (2019) indicated that the nature of divorce is continually changing with time. As such, children's experience of divorce is also changing. Parents' parting may have many effects on the lives and welfare of their children. According to Sands et al. (2017), while some children react to their parents' separation naturally and understandingly, other children can often struggle with the psychological change caused by their parents' divorce. Interventions developed to assist children should account for and accommodate their varied needs.

A number of research studies, including Shafer et al. (2017) and Sands et al. (2017), indicate that it is possible to deliberately enhance the coping ability of children involved in divorce by providing the necessary assistance. However, there has been little effort in research to provide a comprehensive list of therapeutic interventions that can be used to assist children that go through a divorce. Interventions that specifically seek to address the emotional sensitivity of children going through the divorce of their parents are necessary in order to ensure negative emotions are minimized. This research aims to propose approaches that mental health professionals can use to minimize the development of negative emotions in children. However, it will be essential first to highlight some of the adverse effects children experience as a result of going through a high-conflict divorce.

Adverse Effects among Children Resulting from High-Conflict Divorce

One of the many possible harmful effects of divorce on children is poor academic performance. According to Brand et al. (2019), children experiencing the divorce of their parents may end up being confused and distracted as they struggle to adjust to the new family situation.

This lack of concentration can be reflected in their academic performance. Additionally, continuous unhealthy thought patterns may have adverse effects on children's academic life (Rezaei & Vaziri, 2020). Brand et al. (2019) asserted that most children adversely affected by divorce tend to score low marks. In corroboration, Demir-Dagdas et al. (2018), evaluated the impact of divorce-related stress on academic performance and found that stress levels significantly impacted academic performance. They attributed the results to mental distractions, leading to low concentration and, consequently, a short-term or long-term decline in academic performance.

Steinbach (2019) asserted that another outcome of parents' separation on children could be the loss of interest in social activities. Children from families going through a divorce might avoid their peers to avoid explaining their family ordeal, especially when they find it shameful (Steinbach, 2019). As a result, they may find themselves participating in fewer social activities. According to Demir-Dagdas et al. (2018), some children may develop insecurity. For instance, they can worry that their family is the only one subjected to parental separation. Demir-Dagdas et al. (2018) and Steinbach (2019) supported this idea finding that children in families going through high-conflict divorce experienced social isolation.

A study conducted by Luecken et al. (2016) revealed that among the critical problems that can come with divorce, the difficulty of adapting to the change might be a central one. At the time of divorce, children can find themselves surrounded by new conditions with which they have to adapt. This adaptation may not only be urgent but also drastic. Children may have to adjust to a new family dynamic, a new home, and living situation. In some cases, children may join new schools and change their neighbourhoods. These changes may lead to a breakdown of the social relations that children established before the separation of their parents. Indeed,

Steinbach (2019) observed that children could face some level of social isolation immediately after a divorce. In addition, Hirschfeld and Wittenborn (2016) argued that children affected by divorce might develop trust issues due to the sudden disruption of their social bonds. The children can become more prone to emotional and psychological distress than their peers and, as a result, find it harder to adjust to new environments.

Shimkowski and Ledbetter (2018) suggested that, emotionally, separation affects parents as well as children. However, the emotional toll is different for each group. Although parents are adversely affected during separation, the feeling can be more pronounced in children.

Shimkowski and Ledbetter attributed this heightened impact on children to their lack of involvement and control in divorce decisions. Indeed, children have been observed to exhibit increased anger and confusion and heightened levels of anxiety. Shimkowski and Ledbetter further noted that divorced mothers are also less likely to support their children emotionally, and divorced fathers might spend less time with their children.

Loss of time with parents can be another impact of divorce on children. Shimkowski and Ledbetter (2018) found that parents who are not the primary caregiver of their children spent less time with their children as the separation years increase. The study also found that parents who remarry tended to focus more on their new families than their divorced families. A study by Kleinsorge and Covitz (2020) demonstrated that children showed different levels of attachment to their parents at different developmental stages and that conflict in divorce can lead to a reduction in the level of engagement between parents and their children during these different points. Some of the outcomes associated with this reduced parent-child time included delays in meeting developmental milestones for infants, changes in feeding and sleeping patterns for toddlers, developmental regression among preschoolers and social isolation and self-blame for

school-age children and adolescents. These outcomes, according to Kleinsorge and Covitz, can be mitigated if parents are trained on how to closely support their children after a divorce. One of the considerations of this research, therefore, will be to establish how parents in high-conflict divorce can maintain close contact with their children so that the adverse outcomes associated with loss of parent time can be mitigated.

Kleinsorge and Covitz (2020) proposed that many of the adverse outcomes of divorce on children may be avoided if parents effectively hide their conflict from their children. Indeed, exposing children to conflict between parents significantly increased the children's chances of going through a very difficult transition. Rezaei and Vaziri (2020) studied Parent Alienation Syndrome (PAS), which is common in high-conflict divorce. PAS involves one parent trying to turn the child against the other parent by spreading lies or exaggerating their mistakes. Such exposure leads to the child taking sides with one parent thus leading to the alienation of one parent. Beyond the domestic context, Garriga and Pennoni (2020) posited that exposing children to heated court hearings can contribute to stress, anxiety, and guilt among children and adolescents. Witnessing such conflicts adversely affects their mental health after the divorce. For that reason, efforts to protect children from confrontations between their parents must be a consideration when designing interventions.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

This research seeks to establish some of the effective measures that can be used to answer the following – what is the impact of high-conflict divorce on children, what programs or approaches exist to address the impact of high-conflict divorce on children, how can counsellors better support children of high-conflict divorce. The purpose of this capstone, therefore, is to inform mental health professionals on interventions that can be adopted when assisting children

whose parents are going through a high-conflict divorce. In line with this purpose, the different ways by which parental separation affects children will be explored. The project will look at the adverse effects of parental separation on a child's social development, emotional stability, psychological stability, and academic performance. At the end of this capstone, various ways of protecting children's interests will be proposed. This research aims to enable mental health professionals with the most effective therapeutic interventions when treating children whose parents are going through a high-conflict divorce.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented a detailed background of the issue of high-conflict divorce and how it leads to mental health challenges in children. One of the general observations is that exposure to high-conflict divorce causes children mental distress that adversely affects their psychological wellbeing. A number of the evaluated research studies show that the provision of professional psychological assistance can enable children better cope with divorce. For that reason, it is essential to identify therapeutic approaches that can be used to mitigate the impacts of divorce. The next chapter will provide more details of the characteristics of high-conflict divorce and how it leads to different kinds of challenges in the mental health of children. It is noteworthy that, in general, children show different types of attachment to their parents. Witnessing conflict during divorce leads to changes in this attachment that ultimately affects their mental health. As such, attachment theory is a useful framework to use when exploring the impacts high-conflict divorce has on children. In that regard, the next chapter will present a detailed evaluation of the intersection of high-conflict divorce and mental health outcomes in the context of the attachment theory.

Literature Review

In this chapter, the processes and effects of divorce will be evaluated from an attachment-theoretical perspective, starting with discussing the relevance of the attachment theory to the study of divorce and its consequences. I then consider the effects of divorce on children. Throughout the chapter, studies investigating individual differences in attachment and their impact on the development of psychological challenges in children will be analyzed. The chapter will ultimately discuss future steps that should be taken in integrating therapy in addressing the outcomes of high-conflict divorce in children.

Divorce and Attachment Theory

Through an attachment theory lens, interruptions in parenting introduced by divorce may increase the chances of insecure attachment between a child and one or both of their parents. In their evaluation of the link between attachment and parental divorce, Fraley and Heffernan (2013) employed an internet survey in which data on relationship formation and attachment was collected from a total of 12,308 that had experienced parental divorce. Their findings revealed that divorce is correlated to insecure attachment patterns between parents and children. As reiterated by Ludolph (2009), the existing body of attachment theory literature postulates that the emotional bond between spouses shows significant similarity to the attachment bond between a child and the caregiver's primary attachment figure. Pearson et al. (2018) emphasized that although understanding how attachment works is not a prerequisite for a more straightforward divorce process, such teachings may better ensure the predictability of the of family members in high-conflict divorce cases. It enables parents to understand the necessity of maintaining a healthy attachment as they undergo the divorce process to prevent mental health problems among children (Fraley, & Heffernan, 2013).

Attachment theory provides an important lens from which to understand children's experiences through high-conflict divorce as it interferes in the children's lives and may alter significant attachment bonds. Though divorce was not specially focused on by Bowlby, the theory has a number of important links with separation from parents and the breaking of an attachment bond (Bowlby, 1951), both of which are core aspects of divorce. According to Bowlby, the interaction between a child and a parent stimulates a "lasting psychological connectedness between human beings" (Bowlby, 1951, p.194); it forms the core of the attachment theory. Furthermore, Bowlby highlighted the role of separation of a child from a caregiver in stimulating distress or anxiety. This study by Bowlby (1951) established the foundational elements of the attachment theory between the primary caregiver and a child, thereby showing the significance of the research in the current study context. Bowlby (1951) considered attachment between a caregiver and a child from a relatively broader perspective that included motivational attributes and tendencies as children aim to attain proximity between them and the primary caregiver.

According to attachment theory, attachment between children and their parents is categorized as secure, insecure, or resistant (Scharfe, 2017). In secure attachment, parents manifest positive behaviour that evokes trust in their children. On the other hand, insecure attachment usually results when a child has low trust towards their caregivers and usually shows evidence of fear and anxiety when relating with them (Kadir, 2017). Resistant attachment is observed in cases where a child views their relationship with a caregiver as unpredictable. For that reason, children usually show inconsistent responses to their caregivers ranging from being distant and withdrawn to being clingy (Scharfe, 2017). In the specific context of this research, the dynamics of divorce might lead to any of the mentioned types of attachment. For example, a

child might develop a secure attachment with the parent that they perceive as protecting them during parental conflict while at the same time developing insecure attachment with the other parent. In that regard, this theoretical framework is appropriate for the subject of this research because it provides the basis of exploring variations in the relational approaches of children depending on how they perceive the behaviour of their parents in the process of divorce.

Attachment styles in children

Farley et al. (2015), through a survey in which they collected data using an online questionnaire, collected data on attachment from 2399 participants. A taxanometric analysis was used in the data analysis, which led to the finding that children whose parents or caregivers are supportive are found to be low in anxiety develop secure attachment styles. Such children have a positive relationship with others, engage in complicated games, and show more success in classrooms and interactions with classmates. They can understand different perspectives better and trust others more. Individuals whose caregivers were not available to them often walk two different paths-they either have a high level of anxiety or a high level of avoidance. According to Fraley et al. Children showing the anxious-avoidant style of attachment are less productive in managing stressful situations. Such children are expected to withdraw and resist seeking help, which prevents them from forming positive relationships with others. They are prone to showing aggressive and antisocial behaviours, such as lying and harassment, and tending to keep their distance from others to reduce stress.

In contrast to the anxious-avoidant style of attachment, disorganized attachment is evidenced by children engaging in destructive behaviours. Later in their adult life, children with this attachment style harbor frustration and rage in their relationships. These contrasting ways of finding closeness and denying actions are the traits of disorganized attachment. The literature

consistently stated that this type of attachment is correlated with poorer overall well-being outcomes (Fearon et al., 2010; Gillath et al., 2016; Selcuk and Gillath, 2009; Nanni et al., 2012). Scharfe (2017), in her evaluation of the theory, established that in general, the perception of security in children is enhanced by the proximity of their caregivers. However, in cases where children perceive their caregivers as if they are rejecting them, then insecure attachments are likely to emerge. In the specific context of high-conflict divorce, such insecure attachments may be highly likely when children perceive a particular parent as the initiator of the conflict within the home. According to Scharfe (2017), such children are likely to show close attachment to one parent while avoiding the other. This argument aligns with Parent Alienation Syndrome (PAS), a concept presented by Rezaei and Vaziri (2020) that posits it is possible for one parent to antagonize the other parent to the children during high-conflict divorce. As highlighted by Scharfe, giving children too much negative information about the other parent during high-conflict divorce is likely to lead to insecure attachment, thus leading to the potential alienation of one parent (Scharfe, 2017).

Lathren et al. (2020) employed a literature review approach in the development of a theoretical model to explain how parental self-compassion affects attachment in children. In their findings, Lathren et al. established that attachment between a child and a caregiver begins to develop from zero to eighteen months. This assertion is strongly corroborated by Zemp et al. (2016), who employed a literature review approach in evaluating the impact of conflict between parents on children. In their findings, Zemp et al. revealed that children develop early attachments with their caregivers which determine the nature of all their attachments later on in life. Lathren et al. also revealed that relatively strong attachments are also developed towards close family members at this young age. In the context of the argument by Zemp et al. (2016), it

is plausible to argue that the kind of attachments developed by children are also influenced by the kind of relationships they maintain with other close family members. Although Lathren et al.'s research is theoretical, the findings are intriguing and are highly consistent with attachment theory.

Grady (2017) surveyed children from divorced families intending to establish the relationship between attachment and delinquency. Their findings revealed that the negative attachment between children and their parents developed during divorce significantly heightens their likelihood of engaging in delinquent behaviour. This finding is consistent with those presented in the research studies by Lathren et al. (2020) and Zemp et al. (2016). In the specific context of high-conflict divorce, Grady contended that children experience significant separation from their primary attachment figure. The longer duration required for a secure attachment to another figure leads to the development of mental health issues, including anxiety and stress which predicts of the development of problematic. This observation is strongly consistent with findings by Zemp et al. and the arguments presented in the attachment theory by Bowlby (1951). Grady, however, failed to explain how inter-parental conflict could be effectively handled with the aim of alleviating the psychological health issues experienced by children from divorced families.

Outcomes of High-Conflict Divorce

According to Shumaker and Kelsey (2010), divorce has become a common occurrence over the past few decades leading to the termination of many marriages worldwide.

Zdankiewicz-Ścigała and Ścigała (2020) sought to identify the link between attachment style and alcohol addiction by collecting data using a questionnaire from a total of 268 participants. From their findings, it is evident that traumatic experiences and negative attachment were significant

contributors to alcohol addiction later in life. Wal et al. (2019) revealed that, in the event of major disagreements leading to conflict, it is the parents that are adversely affected first. The resulting stress and worry about marriage termination lead to changes in the way they relate to their children, thus leading to changes in the attachment, which leads to the emergence of adverse psychological outcomes for children. Some of the most common adverse mental conditions resulting from high-conflict divorce, according to Shumaker and Kelsey (2020) and Treloar (2018), include depression and anxiety that increase the likelihood of the development of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) later on in life. It is the negative mental conditions that push individuals to alcohol consumption later in life as a means of coping, as revealed in the results presented by Zdankiewicz-Ścigała and Ścigała.

A study by Pepping et al. (2018) used a quantitative method to explore three sub-groups of participants involved in high-conflict divorce. Pepping et al. found that there was a domestic abuse pattern in most divorces characterized by continuing fights over the treatment and custody of children, both outside and within the case, and a possibility that the abuse will occur following the split. The results, in corroboration with findings by Zdankiewicz-Ścigała and Ścigała (2020), showed painful life experiences and pessimism among the affected parties, which adversely impacted children. Some of the adverse outcomes resulting from high-conflict divorce are changes in children's behaviour. Mahrer et al. (2018) conducted a literature review study involving a total of 11 secondary sources with the aim of establishing the impact of shared parenting on children after a high-conflict divorce. Their findings reveal that conflict during the divorce process is linked with behavioural challenges in children. In many cases, even with co-parenting, witnessing conflict predisposes children to develop compulsiveness or become violent.

Psychological Outcomes that need to be addressed in Therapy

According to Zdankiewicz-Ścigała and Ścigała (2020), children frequently lose regular interaction following a divorce and become less attached to one parent. In corroboration, Jakubiak and Feeney (2017), in their secondary research study that aimed to develop a theoretical model to explain how parental affection affects psychological well-being of children, emphasized that the withdrawal of support or emotional attachment due to the absence of primary attachment or secure attachment is a significant stressor to children hence the need for intervention measures. These observations by Zdankiewicz-Ścigała and Ścigała (2020) and Jakubiak and Feeney (2017) show that, apart from children, parents also need psychological support if success is to be achieved in protecting their children from adverse mental conditions. The findings in these research studies, therefore, provide the basis of recommending interventions that focus on entire families rather than children alone.

Children living with separated parents can experience significant difficulties arising from stressors (Zdankiewicz-Ścigała & Ścigała, 2020; Jakubiak & Feeney, 2017), when such a divorce process was categorized as high-conflict divorce with a sudden split. According to Pepping et al. (2018), a high-conflict divorce can be considered a major traumatic event that negatively affects children's psychological or mental wellbeing in the contemporary social, economic and cultural setting. Kuijper and Johnstone (2018) provided an entirely different approach by investigating another form of influence by explaining the essence of peer pressure in increasing mental health problems for children from divorced families. In their research, Kuijper and Johnstone (2018) showed that teenagers from separated families demonstrated a higher risk of sexual engagement within the first five years of the high-conflict divorce. Relatedly, Zdankiewicz-Ścigała and Ścigała (2020) indicated that a significant percentage of teenagers from divorced families were

sexually active before puberty. In addition, most of these teenagers were observed to be alienated from their fathers. In that regard, the mental health issues associated with high-conflict divorce are observed to increase the chances of strained relationships between young people and at least one of their parents. This finding also goes on to show that therapeutic interventions for young children might not be effective with teenagers owing to the different set of social challenges they face.

Whereas some studies (Throuvala et al., 2019; Pepping et al., 2018; Zdankiewicz-Ścigala, & Ścigala, 2020; Jakubiak & Feeney, 2017) indicated that psychological issues associated with high-conflict divorce decline and cease over time, other results suggest that dysfunctional parent-child relationships associated with divorce continue across the life cycle, especially between children and custodial parents. Demir-Dagdaz et al. (2018) used a literature review research approach to evaluate how the parent-child relationship is affected by divorce. According to the researchers, the relationship between the parent and the child plays a vital role in children's emotional transitions throughout their lifetimes. The study disclosed a significant gap relating to the variables that justify the utility of therapeutic de-escalation in addressing psychological health concerns among children during high-conflict divorce.

According to Bastaitis and Pasteels (2019), there is a positive correlation between close attachment and the development of a child's personality. They suggested that inclusion and rapport building between parents and their children are necessary to avert potential psychological distress issues for children. Grady (2017) provided further support for the relationship between a child and parents in a high-conflict divorce. From their findings, children who enjoyed closer attention or affection from a parent after separation were better prepared to handle the adversities inherent in life, including mental health stressors (Grady, 2017). The research by Oren and

Hadomi (2020) provided the argument that the happiness of the parents forms a core part of the parent-child relationship following an instance of high-conflict divorce. In addition, Oren and Hadomi (2020) contended that most single parents exhibit emotional imbalance following a divorce completion, which prevents adequate support such as the feeling of love or affection to their children. Oren and Hadomi (2020) explained that children and the love they offer are, on the one hand, a primary emotional resource for divorced parents. However, as Jakubiak and Feeney (2017) and Albertini and Tosi (2018) emphasized, parents often exhibit unhappiness after a high-conflict divorce, which can interfere with the required emotional and psychological level support necessary for a more positive transition for children.

Furthermore, Bastaits and Pasteels (2019) show that parental happiness, both in marriage and after divorce, is correlated with parental consistency. They claimed this is an essential aspect in influencing children's psychological wellness in a family setting. Bastaits and Pasteels (2019) noted that the more satisfied parents were about their parenting, the more positive and less pessimistic they became, creating an avenue for connection with children and reduced mental health concerns among children. However, there has been little analysis of the variables forecasting parental satisfaction after divorce to ascertain how such aspects impact children's mental wellness (Albertini, & Tosi, 2018). Oren and Hadomi (2020) contended that stressors such as the level of tension between the divorcing parties could inform the extent of happiness or gloom of the parents. They showed that fathers were directly affected by divorce, and their level of happiness is indirectly influenced by the level of tension they had with their ex-wives. Relatedly, Albertini and Tosi (2018) explained how fathers' unhappiness impacted the mental wellness of children following a high-conflict divorce. Their findings indicated that fathers can feel overwhelmed due to their inability to control the decision-making process about their

children's lives. In that regard, the resulting mental challenges can adversely affect their interactions with their children even after the divorce. In such a situation, the difficulty associated with a stressed or depressed parent may lead to the development of stress in children themselves. It, therefore, emerges that parental stress can also lead to mental health challenges in children, even long after the divorce. Therefore, therapeutic approaches should also focus on the fathers' wellbeing, especially if they will be interacting with their children on a regular basis.

Therapies Used in Resolving the Identified Psychological Outcomes in Children after Divorce

Professional intervention is essential in helping children and parents successfully go through a divorce without developing extreme psychological challenges such as depression, anxiety disorder, and PTSD. The need for professional help when going through a divorce is justified by a number of research studies, including Adonteng-Kissi (2020), Kuijper and Johnstone (2018), and Johnstone and Savage (2019). Adonteng-Kissi (2020), for example, asserted that divorcing parents need to seek advice from mental health professionals, especially in relation to how children of different ages should be supported during the separation process. Indeed, children of different ages show different levels of attachment to their parents, and so high- conflict divorce is likely to have different impacts on them (Adonteng-Kissi, 2020). Kuijper and Johnstone (2018) insisted that professional help should focus on preventing children from being exposed to conflicts between their parents. This is because, regardless of age, the greatest risk factor to children's mental well-being during a divorce is the exposure to conflict between their parents (Albertini and Tosi, 2018). Therefore, it is imperative for professionals and parents to discuss strategies to reduce the chances of children suffering adverse psychological effects after the divorce.

There is a strong agreement among scholars and clinicians that maintaining a relationship with both parents serves the children's best interests, even in situations of severe marital disputes and violence. Therefore, a necessary step that divorcing parents should consider is how to build a new co-parental partnership. Experts advise parents to put aside their adverse feelings and build a constructive and cooperative working formula with the child, or they may cause significant personal distress (Winters, 2018). In addition, in the event conflicts are inevitable, discussing issues away from children can help reduce children's experience of conflict. Indeed, Johnstone and Savage (2019) strongly recommended that divorcing parents learn how to handle disputes without involving their children. From this brief evaluation, it emerged that professionals can play a significant role in helping parents protect their children from their conflict. In addition, it has also been established that professionals can also formulate approaches to help children that have been exposed to high conflict more effectively cope with the situation. Nevertheless, a more elaborate discussion of some of the programs that can be employed is necessary. This will help in the identification of the most effective parent-centered and child-centered therapeutic approaches that can be utilized in different contexts to protect the mental health of the involved children,

Training on Coping for Children

Children need sufficient communication skills to help them effectively cope with different situations in their lives (Pang et al., 2018). In the specific context of the attachment theory by Bowlby (1969), communication is presented as one of the most important elements of secure attachments. According to Pang et al. (2018), children who can communicate effectively can cope with their situation by asking for support during conflicts in their families. However, many children may rely on unhealthy coping techniques, such as concealing their feelings (Lee,

2017). Such unhealthy coping strategies make it difficult to determine precisely how the children feel hence reducing their chances of being given emotional support by professionals or the people around them. According to Scharfe (2017), one element of secure attachment is trust between a child and their parent or caregiver. In order to bolster positive coping, the attachment theory points to the need for the establishment of trust between parents and their children as a means of encouraging them to feel free to communicate their worries and fears. This assertion is supported by Pang et al. (2018), who pointed out that children need skills that enable them to develop stable relationships as teenagers and adults, assert their independent feelings and accurately convey their desires in a way that is likely to be heard and accepted in the community. For that reason, mental health professionals addressing the needs of children during the divorce of their parents need to consider focusing on teaching children safe coping skills such as how to express their emotions to the concerned parties effectively.

In corroboration with the argument above, Micklein (2019) revealed that the teaching of coping strategies by mental health professionals is an essential step in assisting children to effectively handle the after-effects of high-conflict divorce. One of the most effective coping approaches, according to Micklein (2019) is communication. The author revealed that children who are able to communicate openly about their emotions are able to cope better with their parents' divorce, as it is much easier to give such children emotional support. This assertion is strongly supported by Zhang et al. (2017), who insisted on the primary role played by communication between children whose parents are in the process of divorce and therapists. In this regard, communication with the relevant experts emerges as an important element of safe coping, owing to the fact that it is through communication that therapists are able to determine how the needs of the children should be addressed. However, Winters (2018) and Kujiper and

Johnstone (2018) presented the argument that the reliance on therapists for safe coping might not always be effective in fostering resilience during high-conflict divorce because it undermines the independent decision making of parents and their children. Since it is impossible for therapists always to provide emotional support to the children, overreliance on them actually increases the vulnerability of children to adverse mental conditions in their usual social environment. This argument points to the need to have parents also taught how to deal with the emotional issues of their children so as to avoid any adverse outcomes even when therapists cannot be accessed.

Play Therapy

Play therapy is yet another therapeutic intervention that has been explored in research. According to Chafe (2016), play therapy provides an important avenue for communication between mental health professionals and children exposed to high-conflict divorce. Lee et al. (2018) evaluated the efficacy of play therapy by focusing on sand therapy. From their evaluation, the researchers established that sand therapy is highly effective in enhancing communication between mental health professionals and children going through a divorce. The integration of play therapy in school counselling sessions is therefore one of the main strengths of this intervention. The important question at this point is, how well does play therapy lead to a reduction in the adverse psychological outcomes identified in the previous sections?

By enabling easy communication between professionals and the affected children, play therapy provides a very effective means of minimizing the development of trauma. This argument is in concurrence with the findings by Chafe (2016), who established that play therapy enables professionals to ascertain the fears of children, thus providing them an opportunity of structuring more intense interventions to assist these children. Nursanaa and Ady (2019) conducted a literature review research study involving 15 journals with the aim of determining the effectiveness of play

therapy in dealing with anxiety disorders in children. Their findings revealed that that play therapy reduces anxiety disorder in children. Lee et al. (2018), on the other hand, found that children who were going through manifest divorce emotions such as worry, anger, sadness, and feelings of rejection. However, after play therapy, the same children manifested positive emotions such as patience, calmness, and happiness. Generally, therefore, Chafe (2016), Lee et al. (2018), and Nursanaa and Ady (2019) all agree that play therapy has a significant positive impact on the emotional wellbeing of children going through a divorce. Even more important is the fact that play therapy allows mental health professionals to determine the specific worries affecting the children, thus allowing them to develop even more intense interventions to achieve positive outcomes. Nevertheless, according to Zhang et al. (2017), despite the numerous benefits of play therapy, its use is more significant to young children. It might, therefore, be ineffective in addressing the needs of teenagers. For that reason, play therapy cannot be used as the sole approach in dealing with depression and anxiety in all cases of divorce, especially where adolescent children are involved.

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy

Esmailian et al. (2018) presented mindfulness-based cognitive therapy as one of the approaches that have been found to be very effective in enhancing the resilience of children going through a divorce. In their experimental research, Esmailian et al. (2018) introduced a group of children of divorce to a mindfulness program while the control group was not involved in the program. Significantly lower levels of anxiety were recorded in the group that was subjected to the mindfulness program. This finding is strongly corroborated by Rempel (2012), who established that training children on mindfulness lead to significant reductions in stress and depression. In the previous sections, it was confirmed that stress, depression and trauma are some of the observed adverse psychological conditions that are commonly observed in children going through high-

conflict divorce. The high efficacy of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy in reducing stress and depression, as established by Esmailian et al (2018) and Rempel (2012) is an indication that the approach can lead to an improvement in the long-term outcomes of children of divorce. For that reason, mindfulness-based cognitive therapy is one of the therapeutic approaches that should be adopted by mental health professionals in assisting children going through a high-conflict divorce.

Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT)

Dialectical Behavioural therapy is a treatment approach in which individuals suffering different kinds of mental distress are taught how to control their emotions through acceptance, mindfulness, and metacognition (Wang & Tan, 2016). Wang and Tan (2016) point out that DBT programs encourage people to accept that the existence of opposing forces is normal in the world, and the only way these opposing forces can be resolved is through dialogue. According to Brodsky and Stanley (2013), there is a blaming tendency during high-conflict divorce as a direct consequence of family members' inability to control their emotions (emotional dysregulation), which further aggravates the ongoing conflict. The mindfulness pillar of DBT, as presented by Wang and Tan (2016), allows people in conflict to be able to better regulate their emotions through reflection. Through this approach, the level of conflict is significantly reduced thus improving the chances of conflicting individuals to engage in meaningful conversations.

Regarding attachment theory, Scharfe (2017) revealed that the perception of security in the home environment is correlated to secure attachments between children and their parents. From the discussion of DBT presented by Wang and Tan (2016), it is evident that parents taking this therapy are less likely to engage in a high level of conflict that portrays a lack of safety in their home to their children. In that regard, going through DBT enhances the chances of parents

to maintain secure attachments with their children despite the fact that they may be in the process of a divorce.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

Cognitive Behavioural therapy (CBT) is a collection of psychotherapy techniques that psychologists use in the modification of the emotions and thoughts of individuals suffering from different psychological problems (Loreno-Luaces et al. , Keefe, & DeRubeis, 2016). Loreno-Luaces et al. revealed that, in CBT, therapists seek to assist their distressed patients by giving them alternative ways of thinking about the situations that are found to cause their distress. On the other hand, in the aspect of CBT, therapists encourage their patients to take some time to consider their actions before they actually engage in them. In the specific context of divorce, Lathren et al. (2020) revealed that consistency in the behaviour of parents increases the chances of the development of secure attachments between them and their children. CBT helps such parents to keep track of their emotions and their behaviours which improves their chances of acting in a manner that is in line with the best interests of their children.

Palmiter (2016) found that CBT effectively treated mood disorders. For instance, CBT is essential in imparting necessary skills that include happy/coupling feelings, outsourcing problems, physiological relaxation and mindfulness, and activation. As applied in this study, CBT is integral in enabling families undergoing high-conflict divorce to heal by providing teaching or educational guidelines to parents or caregivers on the utility of focusing on their children's needs. The educational guidelines are essential in therapy treatment as the course is structured to encourage non-defensive techniques for optimal learning (Palmiter, 2016). The emotional stability and behavioural consistency established through CBT help children maintain

positive attachments with their children in accordance with the argument by Lathren et al. (2020).

Family-Focused Therapy

According to Backer et al. (2020), family therapy is a form of psychotherapy in which a mental health professional helps family members resolve their conflicts by facilitating communication. From this definition, it emerges that communication is one of the essential elements of family therapy. In contrast to the therapeutic approaches discussed above, family therapy brings together parents and their children, implying that interventions are provided for an entire family instead of specifically focusing on children. In the process of divorce, Backer et al. (2020) point out that integrative family counselling allows family members to develop achievable expectations in the court proceedings, teach parenting skills, promote the opportunity to disconnect from unproductive confrontation and eventually develop strong communication and negotiating skills. In the context of the attachment theory, as presented by Scharfe (2017), the behaviour and attitude of parents can lead to different forms of attachment. Through family therapy, parents are guided on how to relate with their children throughout the divorce process to maintain secure attachment, which is described by Scharfe (2017) as leading to a low likelihood of depression and anxiety in children. Based on this argument, family therapy is effective in minimizing the adverse impacts of high-conflict divorce. In addition to helping children cope with their worries, it also allows parents to effectively minimize the level of conflict in the process of divorce.

Integrative family therapy may be of significant assistance in helping with parental separation cases (Shumaker, & Kelsey, 2020). Integrative family counselling targets both partners and other patterns to unify the parents. Some of the interventions targeted in this way

include helping children learn how to manage all parenting structures while tending to their vulnerabilities (Shumaker, & Kelsey, 2020). Similarly, there is the inherent need to permit children to assert themselves on interaction issues with their parents, hence preventing the potential for victimization, as emphasized in the research conducted by Zemp et al. (2016). Zemp et al. (2016) indicated that such an approach to therapy allows children to voice their concerns or put forth their frustrations concerning the parents or custodial aspects that directly affect their mental wellbeing following the high-conflict divorce procedure. Its consideration of multiple stakeholders in the divorce process has made integrative family therapy one of the most commonly used approaches in addressing different issues in high-conflict divorce.

Chapter Summary and Gaps in the Literature

In summary, this chapter has established that the attachment theory effectively provides satisfactory explanations of how children relate to their parents. Generally, as revealed by Scharfe (2017), secure attachment is established in children that view their parents as supportive and protective. However, in the specific context of high-conflict divorce, misunderstandings between parents might cause children to develop negative perceptions towards one or both parents. In such a situation, insecure attachment, which increases the chances of anxiety and depression, is developed. This provides an explanation of why children that go through high-conflict divorce are observed to develop a wide range of psychological illnesses including PTSD.

The evaluated studies reveal that the adverse outcomes of high-conflict divorce can be avoided through a number of therapeutic interventions. Some of the most effective therapeutic interventions identified in this review are training children on coping strategies, play therapy, mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, and family therapy. All these approaches have their unique strengths and weaknesses. For that reason, it follows that the best outcomes can only be achieved

if the different therapeutic approaches are combined in addressing the challenges faced by children in high-conflict divorce. However, hardly any research studies focus on how effective the different therapeutic approaches will be if integrated into one overall intervention specifically designed to address the unique challenges faced by children that have gone through a high-conflict divorce.

Chapter Three: Summary, Recommendations, and Conclusions

A number of research studies, including Pepping et al. (2018), Miklein (2010), Garriga and Pennoni (2020), and Damota et al. (2020), have comprehensively explored the various implications of high-conflict parental divorce scenarios on children. As Van der Wal et al. (2019) explained, the needs of children in divorced families need to be prioritized in the course of divorce proceedings to avert mental health challenges, especially if the divorce is high conflict. According to Visser et al. (2017), parents' attention to their children can significantly decline during this period, leading to an impact on the attachment between parents and child. Visser et al. further suggested that spouses' hatred or indifference during a high-conflict divorce may prevent partners from undertaking actions that support the child through the process. In the worst scenarios, high-conflict divorce cases might lead to alienation of children by their parents (Treloar, 2017).

Given that divorce may lead to adverse outcomes in children, numerous research studies have investigated different interventions to assist children in coping with the transition. A notable example of intervention to alleviate children's mental health concerns during divorce situations is programs targeted at the parents to support healthy parenting during this difficult time. Other studies have highlighted the need for reforms within the treatment system and focused on mental health practitioners in tackling couples' concerns during high-conflict divorce instances (Shumaker & Kelsey, 2020; Visser et al., 2017; Treloar, 2018). Mahrer et al. (2018) established that it is essential for stakeholders in the legal space to handle divorce in a manner that prioritizes the interests of the involved children. Van der Wal et al. (2019) further highlighted the need to support problem-solving among divorcing partners under the litigation practice. For instance, court proceedings in a high-conflict divorce may often be characterized by

instances of fabrication of information in an effort for the couples to discredit each other's reputation with the aim of, for example, winning child custody (Van der Wal et al., 2019).

Miklein (2019) discussed how fabricating information during a litigation or mediation process might negatively impact children if the couple tries to turn a child against the other parent.

Additionally, the high fees incurred during the legal proceedings in the divorce process can add to parental stress (Zdankiewicz-Ścigala & Ścigala, 2020). The Van de Wal et al. (2019) study focused primarily on enhancing parents' focus on their children's needs during high-conflict divorce situations. It is paramount in high-conflict divorce for parents to be aware of the impact of this type of divorce on children and seek support for interventions that reduce the tension between parents.

Evidence presented in the literature review in the previous chapter provides some important insights in relation to the research questions. The first research question sought to establish the effects of high-conflict divorce on children. Evidence presented in this literature review chapter shows that high-conflict divorce can adversely affect the kind of attachment children have with one or both of their parents. Negative attachment can lead children to develop mistrust which creates an avenue for more serious psychological challenges such as anxiety and depression. These conditions play a role in and can undermine the ability of children to perform well academically, thus potentially compromising their future. In response to the first research question, therefore, this literature review demonstrated support to the idea that high-conflict divorce can lead to negative parent-child attachment, anxiety, stress, and depression, all of which can contribute to even more negative outcomes later in life. The second research question sought to identify some of the approaches that can be used in mitigating the adverse effects of high-conflict divorce on children. The evaluated sources revealed that there are

numerous approaches that are commonly used, including training children on coping, play therapy, mindfulness cognitive therapy, dialectical behavior therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, and family-focused therapy. Out of all these therapeutic interventions, it emerged that the family-focused therapy might be the most effective in preventing the potential adverse outcomes of high-conflict divorce because it considers the involvement of the entire family in seeking practical solutions. Based on the overall findings, a number of recommendations are made in the section below.

Recommendations

Under this third chapter, I suggest adopting procedures or programs that promote conflict resolution that limits parents' tension, including parental education and child training under psychoeducation. I, therefore, discuss the specific psychoeducational recommendations that should be most relevant in addressing the needs of children in high-conflict divorce. From the evaluations presented in the previous chapters, it is evident that interventions that address the challenges of children are provided by different stakeholders in the home, school, and specialised practice environments. For that reason, the recommendations provided in this section provide specific actions that should be taken by parents, teachers, and mental health professionals in addressing the needs of children going through high-conflict divorce.

The Integration of Psychoeducation in Family-Focused Therapy

One of the main observations made in the previous chapters is that most parents going through a divorce do not actually understand how their actions affect their children in the long-term. For that reason, it is imperative for mental health professionals, during family-focused therapy, to focus on shedding light on the psychological outcomes expected in children if they are exposed to different high-conflict scenarios. In other words, the effectiveness of family-

focused therapy will depend on how well mental health practitioners are able to integrate psychoeducation. This assertion is supported by a number of scholars including Bose (2020) who revealed that psychoeducation has been found to enable families to be better positioned to give children psychological support during the process of a divorce. For instance, in the previous chapters it was suggested that spouses may blame each other when children manifest challenges in adjusting to the new family situation, such as single parenthood that results from divorce. Such blame increases the chances of children developing negative attitudes between one or both parents. According to Bose (2020), the use of integrative family therapy is important due to the fact that it allows mental health professionals to identify the specific adverse situations such as blame between parents that increase psychological suffering in children. In that regard, it is possible for parents to be advised on how to effectively address their differences without exposing their children to the conflict.

Eddy and Parks (2018) discussed the importance of psychoeducation in explaining how high-conflict divorce scenarios between parents inadvertently draw children into custody disputes, which may make children feel like they need to take sides. Psychoeducation allows mental health practitioners to gain insights into the specific details of the divorce of a particular couple. Family-focused therapy, on the other hand, as suggested by Backer et al. (2020), can facilitate conflict resolution by providing a comfortable environment in which the parties in dispute can freely communicate. The integration of psychoeducation in family-focused therapy, in addition to helping parents communicate more effectively, can boost their knowledge on the negative implications of exposing their children to arguments in the home context. Combining these two interventions should therefore assist in reducing the level of conflict in divorces through the facilitation of communication and reducing the chances of children being exposed to

high conflict scenarios owing to the fact that parents will be more careful not to argue in front of their children. Therefore, psychoeducation is integral in enabling parents to attain the required level of focus towards their children's needs during high-conflict divorce by improving the skills relevant in parenting. This argument is supported by Ferrer and Pan (2020), who insisted on the importance of the psychoeducation model in improving the skills of parents in addressing the mental health challenges faced by their children.

In line with the arguments presented in the attachment theory by Bowlby (1951), it is likely that a focus on training parents on good parenting will help maintain the attachment of their children to them even during high-conflict divorce. Bose (2020), in this regard, presented the assertion that skill development among parents has been found to lead to positive outcomes as far as the relationship between children and the separating parents is concerned. Such positive relationships, as revealed in most of the studies presented in the literature review, enable children avoid the numerous adverse psychological outcomes associated with divorce. Therefore, it is evident that psychoeducation is one of the approaches that should help parents be able to ensure that their children do not suffer psychologically regardless of the level of conflict in divorce.

Training on Coping

Information presented in the literature review reveals that training how to cope with different adverse situations can be a very effective method in ensuring that children are able to avoid most of the adverse psychological situations associated with high-conflict divorce. More specifically, Pang et al. (2018) revealed that prosocial skills are essential in coping. One of the failures identified in current coping programs is the fact that they are only provided to children actually going through adverse situations. This means that programs such as COPE-R, which is mentioned by Pang et al. (2018) are only in response to adverse situations rather than being used

proactively before children are actually exposed to negative situations such as high-conflict divorce. It is likely that many of the coping interventions by mental health professionals are provided when children have already been negatively affected by conflict in their home. For that reason, teaching coping in response to adverse situations that have already occurred might not be effective in helping children avoid going through psychological challenges. In addition, the use of coping interventions only after exposure to high-conflict divorce implies that many children maintain their negative coping strategies in case their parents do not seek professional help. This means that reactive coping interventions can only be provided to children whose parents actually seek the necessary assistance.

Based on the above-mentioned weaknesses in current coping training programs, it seems evident that there is need to integrate coping training in general school curriculums. The inclusion of such programmes in school curriculums means that all children will be able to develop effective coping mechanisms that allow them to avoid the potential psychological impacts of adverse situations such as high-conflict divorce. Research studies including Miklein (2019), Pang et al. (2018), and Scharfe (2017), demonstrated that communication is one of the most effective coping mechanisms that children can employ in the event of adverse situations. School programs that focus on enhancing the coping ability of students would be well served to include communication strategies as one of the approaches. Children could then use these skills when seeking assistance if they face challenges such as high-conflict divorce in their homes. Therefore, it is recommended that ways of integrating highly effective coping programs such as COPE-R in the general school curriculum should be sought. This would allow education of coping to be provided to all children at the same time regardless of whether or not they are facing any challenges at home. In addition, it is recommended that schools should have fully functional

guidance and counselling departments staffed with the relevant professionals. Through the help-seeking capacities that will be developed in children through coping training, it is likely that many children will be more willing to communicate their cases to teachers. In severe cases of high-conflict divorce, teachers might be unable to effectively assist the affected children and so will refer them to the guidance and counselling departments within the school which will in turn take more specialized measures.

Play Therapy and Mental Health Education

Gaikwad, Lalitha and Seshadri (2015) pointed to play-based therapies as being the most effective in creating a positive attachment between preschool children going through family challenges and therapists. One of the reasons why this is so, according to the authors, is the fact that most children use play as a medium of communication. Garrett (2014), on the other hand, argued that play-based interventions help children in the development of resilience when dealing with challenges. In the specific context of high-conflict divorce, therapists should focus on developing play-based interventions for children. In addition to playing with the children, therapists should train conflicting parents on how to engage in play with their children so as to help them create positive attachment as presented by Gaikwad et al. (2015) and develop resilience as argued by Garrett (2014). In addition, as previously proposed, all schools need to have functional mental health departments. Through these departments, play therapy should be made available so as to offer continuous assistance to preschool children in their respective institutions.

On the other hand, the educational course involving children of a relatively older age would involve the use of discourse concerning the significant issues impacting their mental health (Kisthardt & Fines, 2005). In such focused educational programs, a wide range of

interventions including mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, dialectical behavior therapy, and cognitive behavioural therapy could be applied. Jones et al. (2018) in their systematic literature review identified a number of educational approaches that could be used in dealing with the emergence of depression among older children going through adverse situations such as high-conflict divorce. These educational programs include mental health professionals teaching the affected children on how to communicate their issues with their parents. Jones et al. also revealed that parents would benefit from being given guidelines on how to provide counselling to their children within the home environment. However, it seems that the inclusion of different interventions in school curricula could be effective in achieving the desired outcomes in the event of high-conflict divorce. A final recommendation is for academic institutions, through their mental health departments, seek ways to include parents in different mental health education programs owing to the fact that parents play a very crucial role in the success of all the interventions proposed in this chapter.

Conclusions

The current comprehensive review of the various empirical sources discussing the mental health issues experienced by children in high-conflict divorce families provided significant insights into intervention avenues among children. It emerged that most studies in the current review were longitudinal, cross-sectional designs, exploratory, or simulations that tested different groups of children concerning their psychological wellness arising from instances of high-conflict divorce. Attaining the required level of competence in psychoeducation and integrative family therapy is a long process that requires the dedication of both the mental health practitioner and the family members of clients. The psychoeducation curriculum's stipulated framework explains critical stages that are necessary for addressing psychopathology in children

from high-conflict divorce settings, including instances of trauma. Therefore, research on the integrative family therapy approach and psychoeducation curriculum for children should be conducted on a larger sample population. Such a design will be essential in establishing whether the integrative family therapy approach and psychoeducation curriculum effectively mitigate the adverse psychological outcomes that are highly likely in children exposed to high-conflict divorce.

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Appendix A

Definition of Terms

Abusive marriage is a marriage where one of the partners abuses the other, thus leading to unhealthy emotional, physical, financial, psychological, and social well-being of the other partner (Lamela et al., 2018).

Attachment theory is a principle that explains the relationship that someone has and needs from others to have healthy growth and development (Gong & Carano, 2019).

Custodial parent is the parent in charge of the child's custody and has legal rights to determine the child's day-to-day decisions and activities without consulting the other parent (Gong & Carano, 2019).

Divorce is the dissolution of a marriage, legally or not (Mikolai & Kulu, 2018). It describes the ending of a marriage formally, and unlike separation, it entails a legal proceeding and is permanent (KidsHealth, 2020).

Domestic Violence is any kind of abuse in a family setting that leads to unhealthy psychological, emotional, social, and physical well-being of anyone in the family (Lamela et al., 2018).

Effective parenting is parenting that leads to the successful and healthy well-being of a child (Chacko, Fabiano, Doctoroff, & Fortson, 2018).

Grief is a natural response by an individual after losing something valuable to them (Sandle et al., 2018).

High-conflict divorce is a variant of divorce that involves distrust, hostility and communication breakdown that usually takes an extended period of time (Moore, 2019).

Household is where all the individuals or family members residing or living as a unit in a house (Lise and Yamada, 2019).

Long-term effects are the resultant magnitude of something that results for a long period, such as more than three months to even years (Willetts, 2010).

Marriage is a legally and formally recognized union between two individuals, referred to as spouses, enjoying a personal relationship.

Mental illness is range of psychological conditions that affect the mood and behaviour of an individual (Malla et al., 2015).

Non-custodial parent is the parent who is not in charge of the child's custody after a break-up (Gong & Carano, 2019).

Parental absence is the unavailability of providing and promoting the emotional, psychological, social, and physical well-being of a child from childhood to adulthood (Chacko et al., 2018).

Parent-child bonding is a natural relationship of attraction between the parent and the child (Gong & Carano, 2019).

Parenting style is any way of providing and promoting the emotional, psychological, social, and physical well-being of a child from childhood to adulthood (Chacko et al., 2018).

Remarriage is a marriage that takes place after the previous marriage has ended (Lamela, Jongenelen, Pinto, & Levendosky, 2018).

Short-term effects are the resultant magnitude of something that results for a short period, such as less than three months (Willetts, 2010).

Social development is the act of improving the overall wellbeing of the society members, at least to see that they realize their full potential according to Badura et al. (2018)

Social-economic status is a social and economic combined total measure of a person's, family's or community's work experience, economy, and social position in relation to others (Sen, 2018).

Stress is a feeling of emotional or physical tension resulting from a body's reaction to some changes or demands (Bastais & Mortelmans, 2017).

Support system is a group of available people to provide an individual with emotional and practical support (Sen, 2018).