UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

EXPLORING THE EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES OF ADOLESCENTS OF DIVORCED PARENTS IN ASSIN FOSU TOWNSHIP, GHANA

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of the requirements for award of the degree of Master of Philosophy (Counselling Psychology) in the University of Education, Winneba

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DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, **Nana Abena Nkansah**, declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.
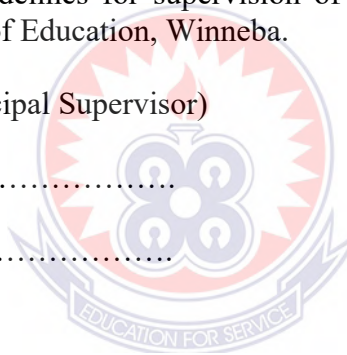
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SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis/dissertation/project as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

Peter Eshun (PhD) (Principal Supervisor)

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DEDICATION

To my lovely mum, Sakina Effah.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

The study explored emotional experiences of adolescents of divorced parents in Assin Fosu Township, Ghana. The study adopted naturalistic paradigm. Also, phenomenological design within the qualitative research approach was used for the study. A sample of 7 participants was selected using maximum variation type of purposive sampling technique. Semi-structured interview guide was used to collect data. The instrument was taken through credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability so as to ensure its trustworthiness. Data were analysed in themes. The study found that feelings of sadness, distress, abandonment, anger, helplessness and thoughts of suicide were the key cognitive experiences of adolescents of divorced parents. Further, adolescents of parental divorce received advice from friends and teachers, smoked, used drugs, drunk alcohol, engaged in premarital sexual relationships and practiced antisocial behaviours as coping strategies adopted for their cognitive experiences. Moreover, divorce adversely affected the social lives of adolescents of divorced parents. It was concluded that parental divorce influenced the thinking processes of adolescents. Also, while very few the adolescents of divorced parents used positive coping strategies, majority of them used negative coping strategies in dealing with their emotional experiences. Additionally, adolescents isolated themselves from some of the peers and not attending social gatherings. It was recommended that teachers should monitor critically how these adolescents think and respond to issues during teaching and learning. Besides, the school counsellor should help these adolescents by providing them with one-on-one counselling on how to deal with challenges emotional experiences. Again, the school counsellor, teachers and heads should educate the entire students on how to fairly treat adolescents from divorced parents.
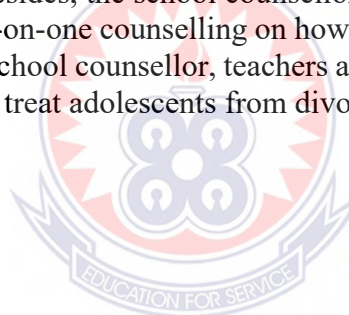
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background to the Study

Adolescence is a transitory period (12years- to- 18years) between childhood and adulthood and it involves emotional and socio-emotional changes (Santrock, 2001). During adolescence, an individual is seen neither as a child nor as an adult. Hall (1904) claimed that adolescents are characterized by emotional instabilities and hyper-activities, which cause them to experience storms and stress. Thus, emotions of adolescents may become stronger and more intense, they experience frequent mood changes quickly and randomly. Erickson as cited in Diane (2007) opined that identity formation creates tension in adolescents to the extent that some of them become confused about their personality. Hence, it is common for the adolescent to feel confused, scared or angry and not know why.

To Erikson (1968), one key task of adolescent period is identity formation and consolidation. It is the time during which individuals must make commitments to certain specific goals and pathways that will potentially have long-term implications for their future life course. Adolescence is also a time when adolescents' images of various future possible selves take shape and begin to influence their occupational and family planning (Markus &Nurius, 1986; Markus & Wulf, 1987). Therefore, when the adolescent develops a negative self-image, they more likely to display poor delay of gratification and are less likely to persevere with set goals and have poor emotions.

Keating (1999) stated that adolescence period is a transitional period in the development of critical thinking and a time of increased decision making. In the 21st Century, continuous learning is not just important, but essential. The amount of

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information available to adolescents can be a burden a blessing. The development of critical thinking in adolescent must be given the necessary guidance for the individual's thinking ability to evolve towards the complex processes used by adults. According to Piaget in his theory of cognitive development as cited by Santrock (2004), adolescents think more abstractly, idealistically and also think more logically. The period of adolescence is very important to the development of any individual. Therefore, any laxity on the part of the parents in assisting and guiding the adolescent may result in academic backwardness and development of unwholesome behaviours. The foundation of what a person becomes in the society is laid in the home and at the initial stage of life. According to Freud (1896), early experiences with parents and family relationships extensively shape development. Parents, therefore have important role to play in seeing to it that their adolescents acquire the appropriate academic development regimen.

Research has consistently shown that family structure can facilitate or limit the ways in which parents are able to positively influence the psychosocial and educational outcomes of their children (Amato & Keith, 2010). This suggests that one of the most important factors that determine the development of children is the family, in which parents provide a secure place for psychosocial development, in which children learn behaviours, moral and ethical principles.

From birth to the maturation period, children pass through developmental stages which are marked by different challenges, but at the same time there are achievements of specific developmental milestones. Adolescence is a developmental stage which has particularly emphasised challenges in the field of rapid physical development, development of identity, and positioning of a young person into the world of adults.

This is the stage which is marked by the transformation of physical identity, way of thinking, taking responsibility, and trying to become independent (Bauserman, 2012).

Therefore, for a majority of adolescents, this is the period which is marked by turbulence and various kinds of fear from failure (Berns, 2014). This situation sometimes transforms into a condition that can be identified as anxiety in adolescents which can interfere with normal psychological processes in adolescence. Also, adolescents are often in conflict with their parents because, they want to be independent, but at the same time their parents' love and the sense of security in the family is necessary for them (Bryan & Devault, 2015).

Tendencies in modern society indicate an increased number of divorces and an increased number of families in which one parent takes care of the child, while the other parent only occasionally participates in the upbringing of children. In the most cases, divorce means frequent conflicts and a tense and insecure atmosphere in the family. If an adolescent grows up in such an atmosphere, his/her judgment of family insecurity may cause the development of anxiety symptoms (Clarke & Hayward, 2016).

Having in mind the natural developmental processes happening during adolescence, the researcher explored the emotional experiences of adolescents of divorced parents in Assin Fosu Township, Ghana. Since we know that family is an important factor in child development, we assume that adolescents who grow up in divorced families have higher level of anxiety than those growing up in complete families.

It is very difficult to make a definition of the concept of family that is common for all human societies. Societies give different meanings to the concept of family depending

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on their own structures. It is accepted by all societies that family is one of the essential structures of organisation, and it is even the foundation of society (Furstenberg, 2011).

Various definitions are developed for the concept of family. Some of these definitions focus on the structure of family while the others focus on the functions of family. A common point of these definitions is that family is the most basic social foundation in any society. Family is a social structure making a person happy to be a member of it; it is a place where a person feels protected in every aspect of life. Basic needs in life are fulfilled by family. The first interaction is experienced within the family. Basic behaviours and habits related to life are acquired by an interaction in the family (Hetherington & Kelly, 2012). Family is the first place of learning which is very important for the child's social and emotional development (Kantrowitz, 2012).

Family setting in which the child grows up has an important role for the development of child personality; it provides the most useful adaptation skill to the society to which the child belongs. Parents' support to the child in the adaptation process to the physical and social environment has a significant impact on child social and personality development (Kellaghan, 2013). A harmonious relationship between mother and father helps them develop a consistent, warm, and affective approach to their children. In that way, family represents an environment in which love, compassion, care, confidence, support, and democracy are provided. Furthermore, a democratic interaction between mother and father grounds the development of a healthy and efficient communication between mother-father and their children (Kellaghan, 2013).

From the legal perspective, divorce is described as the termination of the marriage with the decision of judge based on anticipated reasons explained in the legislation. Different authors presented different factors that might cause divorce. Knox (2014) presented the

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basic reasons for divorce as follows: inadequate familiarisation of husband and wife during premarital process causes high probability for divorce; different socio-economic status of husband and wife and different cultural environment makes harmony difficult; communication problems among couples damage the relationship of husband and wife; an intervention by parents of husband and wife to family life dynamics cause conflicts and many problems in marriage; jealousy harms the trust and tolerance between husband and wife effecting happiness and harmony.

In accordance to Knox (2016), the problems in marriage which can lead to divorce can be listed as follows:

1. Financial problems: It is frequently reported that the persistence of financial problems in the family run into the risk for divorce.
2. Communication problems: Most of problems among people usually occur as a result of failing of communication or a faulty communication. Communication problems can happen between wife and husband, or parents and children, or wife-husband and their parents.
3. Environmental problems: Environmental problems can cause the existence of some problems within the family by factors such as the effect of the working conditions of family members or neighbourhood relations.

Even though divorce is perceived as a relief and rescue from an unhappy marriage for couples, it actually means the destruction of the family system and the marriage which was established with great expectations and hope (Knox, 2016). Very often problems would not be solved with divorce and it can affect couples in a negative way regarding psychosocial and financial aspects. Because of these reasons, divorce in general is not

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interpreted as a complete return to the premarital freedom or a rescue, meaning a new bachelorhood period (Knox, 2016).

Divorce is actually the beginning of a difficult period which is not the end of unhappiness. Couples have the feeling of emptiness. They have needs of overcoming previous habits, and building a new life style and new relations (McLanahan & Gary, 2014). Today, divorce has become a natural matter as a part of marriage life even though it is unfavourable for families and especially children. In cases when divorce is the best solution for the family, realisation of divorce in a civilised way causes less psychological and personal damage in husband and wife, and their children (McLanahan, Astone, Nan, & Nadine, 2014).

The concept of mother/father in marriage is a vital element in terms of psychological development and social adaptation of the child. In other words, living with mother and father, growing up with mother and father, and having an unbroken family are the essential factors needed for emotional development, as well as social and psychological maturity of the child (McLanahan et al., 2014). However, if the concept of mother/father in marriage means family atmosphere with tense relations between mother and father and dominant presence of restlessness and conflicts, the family concept does not provide a secure environment for the child. It is indicated that the degree of impact of divorce on child depends on the way divorce is realised (Middleton, 2011).

Moreover, it is specified that the case of a stressful period of divorce, an unhealthy communication, and a lack of love and security issues affect the child deeply rather than divorce itself (Santrock, 2004). Getting over the case of divorce is very difficult for an adolescent without an intense parental support. Child has the fear of being abandoned.

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Therefore, a child whose father and mother are divorced need more clear signs to be loved and valued. Each child is affected by the separation of mother and father. The degree of influence depends on some factors such as age, personality development, and parental attitude (Middleton, 2011; Santrock, 2004).

The emotional reaction of adolescents on divorce is marked by pain, disbelief, anger and the feeling of loss. Regarding their behaviour, some adolescents show problems in behaviour, such as running away from school, taking drugs and alcohol, failure at school and similar, which can be considered as a response to parent's divorce (Santrock, 2004). Adolescents often have the feeling of guilt toward parent's divorce; they believe that either their behaviour or the fulfillment of parents' expectations is the cause of divorce (Santrock, 2004). These feelings, besides the judgment of the loss of security of the family environment, reveal the cause of depression or the development of symptoms of anxiety (Schneider & Coleman, 2013). The reaction on parents' divorce in adolescence is different according to gender. Young girls begin early sexual relations more often due to the lack of self-confidence, while boys often react on a behaviour area by aggressive and delinquent behaviours. The risk for drug and alcohol abuse is present in both genders (Stanhope & Carter, 2013).

It is also stated that divorce has rarely a positive effect on the adolescents. Moreover, it is emphasised that lack of a parent, emotional and financial tightness and sometimes continual conflicts between divorced parents would cause psychological problems for many adolescents (Stanhope & Carter, 2013). However, it is also mentioned that even though adolescents have adaptation problems for the new life, the sensitivity for divorce mostly depends on age, developmental maturity, length of passed time after divorce and social support system (Stanhope & Carter, 2013). The reactions also change

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according to the maturity of the adolescent and circumstances at home. Therefore, it is explained that the determination of the standard reactions of such situation is very difficult (Ward, 2014). It was upon this bedrock that the study sought to explore the emotional experiences of adolescents of divorced parents in Assin Fosu Township, Ghana.

1.2   Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by Intergenerational Transmission Theory of Divorce by Bengtson (1985) and Attachment Theory by Bowlby (1986).

Intergenerational Transmission Theory

This theory was propounded by Bengtson (1985). According to Bengtson (1985), behaviour in the home by parents would be replicated by children in their adult lives. This theory is applicable to various aspects of sociological research including the study of family violence, social capital, and marriage and divorce. This theory explains how violence in the family-of-origin is replicated in later adult intimate partnerships (Franklin & Kercher, 2012; Gover, Kaukinen & Fox, 2008; Kerley, Xu, Sirisunyaluck, & Alley, 2009).

Applied to social capital, Anette Laureau's (2001) book *Unequal Childhoods* explained how social capital in the form of language, status, and knowledge is transmitted through parents to their children based on class. Other studies indicated how parents' educational attainment and their attitudes toward education as a form of social capital are transmitted to their children (Martin 2012; Patacchini & Zenou 2011). When applying this theory to marriage and divorce, researchers argue that parental divorce is transmitted to their children, who will likely divorce themselves (Amato, 1996; Glenn & Kramer, 1987; Greenberg & Nay, 1982). The theory of intergenerational transmission is applicable to a variety of disciplines and topics in sociology.

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Studying intergenerational transmission is important in research. The theory takes into account how attitudes and behaviour in the family are passed on from parents to children. Learning about marriage and divorce often occurs within the family. Greenberg and Nay (1982) suggested that since children's earliest and most prolonged exposure to the institution of marriage is through their parents, it is no wonder that their perception of the happiness of their parents' marriage may be strongly associated with their own attitudes toward marriage. When a child grows up in a home where a harmonious marriage and effective communication is practiced, an adult child will believe that marriage is a good thing. If parents communicate to a young child that marriage is a good thing, a child will reflect those values when they are an adult.

However, if a child grows up in a home in which the parents argue often and there is continuous conflict the child will view marriage as negative. If parents communicate an environment of marital discord and communicate attitudes favorable of divorce, then the child will reflect that in his/her own life when he/she is an adult. It is necessary to note that research states that the causal mechanisms through which relationship attitudes are transmitted is still unclear (Willoughby, 2012).

Intergenerational transmission occurs in families, however, why or how it occurs is unclear. Regarding attitudes about marriage and other family relationships, Willoughby (2012) noted that it is likely that parents model positive and negative relationship behaviour to their children and in turn, these children begin to make generalisations and develop expectations about marriage and other family relationships. Children not only make generalisation and develop expectations about marriage and family relationships, but they may also model their own lives after what they experience through their parents' relationship based on this model.

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This theory therefore suggests that there are three mediating mechanisms behind the intergenerational transmission theory of divorce. First, the researcher conceptualised that adolescents from dissolved families of origin are more likely to be exposed to socioeconomic settings and to make life course decisions that increase their risk for union dissolution, for example, quit school, leave the parental home early, and initiate marital and non-marital unions and have children earlier in life than their peers from intact families. Early family formation and scant socioeconomic resources are both associated with higher union dissolution risks. Second, the researcher conceptualised that adolescents are likely to hold less negative attitudes toward divorce and are likely to feel less commitment to marriage.

Third, it had been conceptulaised by the researcher that adolescents are more likely to exhibit patterns of interpersonal behaviour that can increase the risk of union dissolution, for example, anger, jealousy and insufficient ability to communicate. All these potential mechanisms have received empirical support (Amato & DeBoer 2001; Gähler, Hong & Bernhardt 2009). Thus, parental divorce and other circumstances surrounding this event, seem to lead adolescent children into other life paths than children from intact families, and to enter adulthood with other experiences and attitudes, increasing their own risk for divorce.

This process mirrors Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, which suggested that as children and young adults observe what goes on in their families, including their parent's relationship, they will begin to develop their own perceptions of what marriage and divorce are. As children observe the quality of their parents' marriage they will form their own beliefs and values of marriage based on the relational model provided by their parents (Willoughby, 2012). Social learning theory and intergenerational transmission of attitudes theory are connected. Children learn from their surroundings

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(parents) and this influences their attitudes. Parental attitudes are passed down to the child via social learning.

Studies indicate that children who grow up in divorced families hold attitudes that are more favorable toward divorce, and in turn, are more cautious about marriage and life-long commitments in their adult lives (Amato, 1996; Amato & DeBoer, 2001; Cunningham & Thornton, 2006; Greenberg & Nay, 1982; Kunz, 2000; Pope & Mueller, 1976). The literature consistently reports that parental divorce increases the likelihood of adult children's divorce (Amato, 1996; Glenn & Kramer, 1987; Greenberg & Nay, 1982). These studies indicated that adult children of divorce are more willing to seek divorce than their counterparts, adult children of intact families.

Some researchers argue that it is a combination of the reduced commitment to marriage as an institution and lower confidence that marriages can remain stable and happy, that may account for the heightened risk of divorce among adult children from divorced families (Amato & DeBoer, 2001; Glenn and Kramer, 1987; Whitton, Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2008). Other researchers argued that it is the transmission of attitudes about marriage and divorce from divorced parents to their children that accounts for the heightened risk of divorce (Van der Valk, de Goede, Larsen & Meeus 2008; Willoughby, 2012).

Using the intergenerational transmission theory, the researcher conceptualised that through the transmission of attitudes from divorced parents to adolescents, adolescents in Assin Fosu Township are likely to learn attitudes that can make them less likely to commit, less confident in marriage, as well as more likely to opt for divorce when marital problems arise. The intergenerational transmission of attitudes about marriage and divorce suggested that adult children who have parents who are divorced are more likely to divorce themselves or are more likely to hold positive views of divorce (Kulka

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& Weingarten, 1979; Kunz, 2000; Thornton & Freedman, 1982). In order to determine why these adult children of divorced homes are more likely to divorce it is important to understand where attitudes that are pro-divorce stem from.

The researcher perceived that intergenerational transmission theory would help provide insight as to how these attitudes may be transmitted. The researcher therefore conceptualised that if adolescents in Assin Fosu Township grow up with parents that are pro-divorce and have an unstable marriage, then these adolescents' ideas about divorce is likely to be positive and ideas about marriage is likely to be negative. The reason had been that the researcher perceived that these adolescents are likely to learn attitudes from their parents' relationship and internalise ideas of divorce to create their own understanding of divorce.

The researcher also believed that ideas of divorce, whether negative or positive, are likely to be transmitted from the parent to the adolescent. This study therefore wanted to explore whether or not adolescents would learn attitudes of marriage and divorce through their perception of their parents' relationship. In other words, if adolescents in Assin Fosu Township perceive their parents to have been committed to each other, are they more or less likely to see commitment in marriage as a positive thing. On the other hand, if these adolescents perceive their parents to have had a negative relationship and not been committed, are they more or less likely to see commitment in marriage as a negative thing.

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory was propounded by Bowlby (1969). The human child, according to Bowlby (1969), is biologically destined to attach to her/his caregivers serving the evolutionary surviving function of keeping the child safe from danger. The child does not select the care-giving persons during the first half of the first year, but after that

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she/he starts to show preferences for the better-known caregivers. The child seeks them and uses them as safe harbours or safe bases when stressful situations occur (Bowlby, 1969). The child can, depending on different circumstances, among other things deficient care, separations with long duration or loss of an attachment person, in opposition to secure development, develop an insecure attachment that could characterise the child's interpersonal orientation for the rest of its life (Bowlby, 1973). Attachment means an enduring inner representation of the relation to the parent incorporating a strong tendency to seek closeness to the parent in case of danger. To be attached to somebody means more than the seeking of closeness to avoid danger; in the course of time attachment becomes a part of our personality, the way in which we organise our inner life (Carlberg, 1994; Broberg, Granqvist, Ivarsson & Risholm-Mothander, 2006).

Parental divorce could mean the loss of an attachment person with whom I would not have the possibility of being fully attached to, or to whom I would not have full access. Studies emphasise the advantages of secure attachment in coping with divorce among both children and adults and in the parenting before and after the divorce (Cohen & Finzi-Dottan, 2005). Birnbaum et al. (1997) found that attachment style moderated a person's emotional reactions to a divorce and was significantly related to the appraisal and coping with the crisis, which in turn mediated the association between divorce and mental health.

Also, Ainsworth (1989) and Cohn, Cowan, Cowan and Pearson (1992) found that when qualities associated with secure attachment such as good communication skills, use of constructive coping strategies and ability to integrate contradictory emotions, regulate negative emotions and solve conflicts constructively are present, they would, taken

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together, enable divorcing parents with a secure attachment style to share the parenting with each other.

This theory was used to guide the study because the researcher conceptualised that this theory of attachment can be used to describe the relationship between parent and adolescents in Assin Fosu Township. Thus, this attachment can provide the adolescent child in Assin Fosu Township with an idea of how to form a relationship and adjust to various life experiences. The researcher further conceptulaised that this theory assumes that adult friendships or romantic relationship among adolescents in Assin Fosu Township can be develop from parents or early caregivers. Also, it could be deduced from this theory that since this attachment is formed early, a parental divorce is likely to cause adolescents in Assin Fosu Township to have relationship issues later in life.

This is in line with what Hines (2007) posited. Hines opined that divorce can change this attachment style and can make a child have feelings of anger, resentment and confusion, which can alter the child's ability to form meaningful relationships. This is one impact divorce can take on adolescents, after a parental divorce. It is hard for adolescents to understand this process, while trying to figure out who they are themselves. The researcher believes that family structure plays an important part in helping an adolescent adjust and understand to the changes in their life and body. This has been shown in prior studies that family structure is one of the factors that influence an adolescent's success (Hines, 2007; Carranza, Kilmann & Vendemia, 2009).

It could be inferred from the discussion that building relationships and committing to a relationship is one of the impacts on adolescents during divorce. Research has also shown that marital conflict can affect the development of intimate relationships during adolescents (Martin, Specter & Martin, 2003). Along with building relationships, several other factors contribute to effected relationships. Adolescents and young adults

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have shown that they have trouble with commitment, lower trust in their partners, lower satisfaction, trouble with interpersonal skills and greater acceptance of divorce (Fine & Harvey, 2006). The question now is: Do adolescents in Assin Fosu Township go through these emotional experiences after parental divorce? Findings of this study can help address this question.

1.3   Statement of the Problem

Encouraging and supporting healthy marriages is a cornerstone of a healthy social development in a child. Amato (1993) opines that, about a third of all children born in the in the world each year are born out of wedlock. Similarly, about one fourth of all marriages end in divorce, and when children are involved, many of the resulting single-parent households are poor. For example, less than 10 percent of married couples with children are poor as compared with about 35 to 40 percent of single-mother families (Zajonc, 2011). The combination of an alarmingly high proportion of all new births occurring out of wedlock and discouragingly high divorce rates among families with children ensures that majority of children will spend a significant amount of their childhood and adolescent in single-parent households (Zajonc, 2011).

Moreover, research shows that children who grow up living in an intact household with both biological parents seem to do better on a wide range of social indicators than do children who grow up in a single-parent household (Adam, 2010). For example, they are less likely to drop out of school, become a teen parent, be arrested, and be unemployed. While single parenthood is not the main nor the sole cause of children's increased likelihood of engaging in one of these detrimental behaviours, it is one contributing factor (Adofo, & Etsey, 2016). The assertion here is that whenever there is divorce it is the child that suffers the most, most importantly when the child is in his or her adolescent stage.

Though it has been established that the adolescent child suffers from divorce in diverse ways, yet the issue of divorce still persist in the Fosu Township. Anecdotal evidence among adolescents in Assin Fosu Township reveal that within a short period of time after divorce, some adolescents took up deviant behaviours such as smoking, drugs and alcohol. They even dress differently than the other kids in their communities. For example, they sometimes wear baggy clothes, make heavy make-up and their hair styles are always with different colour (from red to purple, to jet black and many others). Others too put on earrings covering their ears, nipples, navel and tongue. This situation adversely affects the adolescent child in diverse ways. For instance, divorce places the child under emotional and cognitive stress which could adversely affect his/her state of mind (Jeynes, 2002).

Despite the fact that it has been established that divorce has a consequential effect on the adolescent child, it is interesting to note that few researches have been conducted within the domain. Adam (2010) examined the effects of parental separation and divorce on the psychological well-being of secondary school learners in a school in the Durban South Region. Similarly, Hickman (2007) investigated the social context of divorce and its impact on adolescent psychological well-being. Hickman's study focused on social context of divorce and its impact on adolescent psychological well-being instead of emotional experiences of adolescents of divorced parents.

In Ghana, Mainoo (2008) examined factors affecting adolescent perceptions of psychosocial adjustment after parental divorce. Beside the work of Mainoo, there are other few studies that have been conducted on divorce yet those studies fail to factor the emotional challenges the adolescent child goes through whenever there is divorce between their parents. Again, most of these studies were done in the major regional capitals putting the towns and the villages at a disadvantage. There is therefore the need

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to carry out a study to ascertain what pertains in the other areas of the country as far as divorce is concern. Taking into consideration the fact that there has been a report of increase divorced cases in the Fosu township, the researcher saw the need to carry out this study to explore the emotional experiences of the adolescent child whose parents have divorced.

1.4   Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore the emotional experiences of adolescents of divorced parents in Assin Fosu Township, Ghana in order to further understand the phenomenon.

1.5   Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

1. explore the emotional experiences of adolescents of divorced parents in Assin Fosu Township.

2. explore the effects of divorce on the social lives of adolescents of divorced parents in Assin Fosu Township.

3. find out the effect of divorce on the academic lives of adolescents of divorced parents in Assin Fosu Township.

4. identify ways adolescents cope with their emotional experiences as a result of parental divorce in Assin Fosu Township.

1.6   Research Questions

The following questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What are the emotional experiences of adolescents of divorced parents in Assin Fosu Township?

2. How does divorce affect the social lives of adolescents in Assin Fosu Township?

3. How does divorce affect the academic lives of adolescents in Assin Fosu Township?

4. How do adolescents cope with their emotional experiences as a result of parental divorce in Assin Fosu Township?

1.7   Significance of the Study

To commence with, school counsellors and teachers, counsellors for youth programmes, religious settings and other Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) can use findings of the study to plan effective intervention goals to run programmes for adolescents from divorced families by utilising findings from this study. Similarly, NGOs can utilise the findings of this study as basis of new programmes or strengthen the approach of existing youth programmes to increase programme effectiveness.

Moreover, policy enactment on programmes to help youths that have experienced parental divorce can be informed by the findings of this study. Findings of the effects of divorce of the emotional well-being of adolescents can enable local government and District Councils to plan and support agencies whose intervention strategies are based on local data and relevant findings from this study.

Also, the study is designed to provide a contextual balance to the existing literature on experiences of adolescents following parental divorce. It is intended to lay the ground

for further academic exploration as well as to increase dissemination of findings through peer reviewed publications, seminars and national social work workshops.

1.8   Delimitations of the Study

The study was delimited to emotional experiences of adolescents of divorced parents in Assin Fosu Township, Ghana. The study used adolescents from parental divorce homes in in Assin Fosu Township for data collection. These adolescents were within the age bracket 12-20 years. The researcher believed that these adolescents would be able to describe their stories with regards to parental divorce.

1.10 Operational Definition of Terms

Adolescent: Adolescent in this study refers to individuals (youth) in Assin Fosu Township whose chronological age ranged from 12-18 years.

Coping Mechanism*:* This is a psychological strategy or adaptation that an adolescent from parental divorce family relies on to manage stress. Thus, any characteristics or behavioural pattern that enhances adolescent's adaptation to parental divorce. Sometimes, coping mechanisms are intentional choices, while other times a person may be unaware that they're using them.

Emotional Experiences: This is a situation where adolescents feel loss, anger, confused, anxious, overwhelm, frustrated, hurt, sad, stressful, depressed, disliked or hatred and many others as a result of parental divorce.

Psychological Experiences: They are the emotional problems that children from parental divorce homes go through as a result of their present conditions.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0   Introduction

The chapter deals with literature review on emotional experiences of adolescents of divorced parents in Assin Fosu Township, Ghana. Subheadings to be discussed are:

1. The concept of adolescents,

2. The concept of divorce,

3. Emotional experiences of adolescents of divorced parents,

4. Effects of divorce on social lives of adolescents,

5. Effect of divorce on the academic life of the adolescent,

6. Coping strategies adolescent of divorced parents employed to manage the experiences they go through

7. Empirical evidence

2.1   The Concept of Adolescents

When studying adolescence as a developmental stage in a person's life many authors differ in their opinion's concerning how to define adolescence. Some authors view adolescence as the period between puberty and the completion of physical growth (Louw et al., 2004). Others defined adolescence as the period of physical and psychological development from the onset of puberty to complete growth and maturity (Gouws, Kruger & Burger, 2000). Still other like Santrock (2004) described adolescence as a period of development in which the individuals push for autonomy and seek to develop their own identity.

Santrock (2004) viewed adolescence is a time of evaluation, of decision making, of commitment, of carving out a place in the world. The adolescent's thoughts are more

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abstract and idealistic; they are pre-occupied with thoughts about the future, which friends to choose, whether to go to college, who they should date and whether to have sex or not, and so on. Peer relationships become more intimate; they start dating and begin sexual exploration. Adolescents show a considerable interest in their body image. Their relationship with parents takes on a different form. These developmental changes coincide with social and familial changes in the adolescent's life and this transition is often stressful.

A more definition states: Mosby's Medical Dictionary (2009) described adolescence as the period in development between the onset of puberty and adulthood. It usually begins between 12 and 13 years of age with the appearance of secondary sex characteristics and spans the teenage years, terminating at 18 to 20 years of age with the completion of the development of the adult form. During this period, the individual undergoes extensive physical, psychological, emotional, and personality changes.

It is during this life phase that adolescents continue to develop their social and intellectual skills that will prepare them for adult roles and responsibilities. Adolescents develop a more sophisticated reasoning ability; they become more knowledgeable, and make important educational and occupational decisions that will shape their adult careers. As their cognitive abilities increase, they are able to perform tasks more easily, quickly and efficiently. With their heightened emotional abilities, they display more insight in dealing with problems.

These biological, emotional and psycho-social changes provide a wealth of developmental opportunities for the adolescent to engage in behaviours that lead to health risks, on the one hand, or to develop a healthy life style, on the other. Adolescence is a period of normal growth toward biological, cognitive, and psychosocial maturity, although it represents a difficult phase in human development it

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is not necessary a period of storm and stress. While it is a period of growth, increased autonomy, and exploration, it also involves risks (Gouws et al., 2000).

Erikson's theory of identity development is pertinent to this research study as it situates the study within the developmental stage of the adolescent. At the core of Erikson's theory is the acquisition of an ego-identity, and the identity crisis is the most essential characteristic of adolescence. Erikson describes adolescence as the period during which the individual must establish a sense of personal identity. During this developmental period adolescent must answer questions for themselves about where they came from, who they are, and what they will become. According to Erikson, in a period of rapid social change adolescents seek autonomy from their parents or guardians; the older generation is no longer able to provide adequate role models for the younger generation. However, even if the older generation can provide adequate role models, adolescents may reject them as inappropriate for their situation (Erikson, 1968).

It is during this developmental stage that adolescents have a greater affiliation with their peers. Erikson believes that the importance of the peer group cannot be overemphasized. It is their peers that help adolescents find answers to the question "Who Am I?" as they depend on social feedback as to what others feel and how they react to the individual. These transitions cause youth to rarely identify with their own parents; they often rebel against their dominance, their value system, and their intrusion into their private life, since they must separate their identity from that of their family. During this period the adolescents must assert their autonomy in order to reach maturity and engage in abstract thinking (Muuss, 1975).

Erikson outlines that each stage poses conflicts or crises that must be resolved in order for the adolescent to constructively move on to the next stage of development. If the adolescent fails to resolve these crises it may negatively affect their development.

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However, a positive outcome of the identity crisis is dependent on the adolescents" willingness to accept his past and establish continuity with their previous experiences. In finding an answer to the questions: "Who Am I?" "Where am I going?" "Who am I to become?" adolescents have to make a commitment to a system of values-religious beliefs, vocational goals, a philosophy of life, and an acceptance of their sexuality.

Only once adolescents achieve these aspects of ego-identity is it possible for them to move into "adult maturity", achieve intimacy of sexual and affectional love, establish deep friendships, and achieve personal self-abandon without fear of loss of ego-identity (Muuss, 1975). Erikson's theory outlines how adolescence is a developmental period which comprises of rapid cognitive, emotional, social and biological changes, and these transitions may result in stress (Erikson, 1968).

2.2   The Concept of Divorce

Divorce is one of the complex social problems in today's society. According to Ohinz (2010), most people today believe that the survival of a marriage depends upon the personal commitment of the couple who enter into marriage. Serious disputes between couples may result in their separation or the decision to dissolve the marriage. Attempts of negotiation and reconciliation usually precede the termination of a marriage. Divorce is always an unhappy event because it represents failure. For the couple they have failed to maintain a link between themselves and their families. It is officially recognised as a marriage that is beyond reconciliation and therefore leads to termination.

Divorce has become an epidemic.

In most societies where the adversarial system is practiced, divorce is granted on explicit grounds, such as adultery, desertion, and cruelty. The Namibian legal system permits divorce, and the high divorce rates (17% as mentioned earlier) causes young people to feel uncertain about entering into marriage. According to Saad (2008), in a

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sociocultural context, the United States has previously disapproved divorce on moral grounds. However, since 2001, most Americans view divorce as morally acceptable. Those showing a lower tolerance of divorce include people 65 and older, political conservatives, and a few religious individuals.

Hughes (2009) suggested that the rising divorce rates are affected by the fact that men and women are economically independent and are in less need of each other. Reliable birth control also allows men and women to separate sexual activity from having children. It has affected all socio-economic and cultural groups. Disadvantaged groups have a higher incidence of divorce. Contributing facts are premarital pregnancy, youthful marriages, low education level, and low income (Santrock, 2004). Parental divorce will affect more and more children.

The decision to divorce is rarely a sudden act. Many people go through a number of small acts such as discussions, arguments, and retaliations. These occurrences cool off the relationship and this leads to the final step in the process of the couples growing estrangement. The most common grounds for divorce as suggested by Eshelman (1997) included the breakdown of marriage, incompatibility, cruelty, desertion or irreconcilable differences. Other reasons for divorce include problems such as physical assault, alcoholism or infidelity and lack of emotional fulfillment, to name a few. In the past, divorce has often been regarded as a source of stigma.

Today it continues to be so in some circles, however it may also symbolise freedom and new opportunities, and it may also bring exhilaration and relief. When divorce occurs, it ends a customary social relationship, and dissolves the nuclear family. Divorce is a complex and emotional transition, and most people experience it as a severe crisis (Santrock, 2004).

The break-up of the family structure as a result of the divorce can leave children unsettled as they have to deal with feelings of insecurity and abandonment. If not dealt with effectively it can lead to problematic adjustment (Botha, 2009). The effects of divorce are inescapable and long lasting. Some adolescents engage in acting out behaviour such as promiscuity, alcohol and drug abuse, indicating their low self-esteem. Many children of divorce experience increased risks for social, emotional, and academic difficulties. On the other hand, there are children who successfully adjust to the disruptions and who do not display significant signs of distress as a result of their parents' divorce (Thompson & Henderson, 2007).

Some areas in which adolescents experience positive outcomes include maturity, because many assume added responsibilities. The development of an improved self-esteem, because there are those who cope effectively with the changes to their life's circumstances and some develop empathy, due to an increased concern for family members. The first year following the divorce is generally a period of extensive disruption, disorganisation, depression, restlessness, feelings of failure, hostility, anger, anxiety, self-blame and a chaotic search for escape from distress (Louw et al., 2004). Gradually the individual begins to make a determined effort to regain his/her footing, to start functioning again, and to restore order to his/her life. For some this includes remarriage.

2.3   Causes of parental divorce

In today's society, people are socialised in a particular manner whereby they want to be viewed in a positive light and be accepted by societies and their applied norms and standards. Owing to the fact that "separation and divorce" is against the norm, and viewed as something that is taboo, people affected by this are viewed in a negative light.

According to Panse (2009), society frowns on divorce and divorced people and moreover they are likely to find themselves as social pariah. From the above-mentioned statistics, one can conclude that marriage is no longer the institution that it once was. It is becoming increasingly common for couples to seek a legal separation and even divorce when things are no longer working out. The processes of separation and divorce become a bit easier when just a man and woman are involved. However, it becomes more difficult when the man and woman are parents and there are children to think about as well.

It is noted in Panse (2009) that there are many different and complex causes and reasons for divorce, each of them specific to that particular couple's marital relationship, their individual experiences and personal problems. Furthermore, Johnson (1988) stated that marital failure cannot be traced to a single factor, for causes can be attributed to a partner's behaviour, to problems in the relationship or even to broader social factors.

It is further brought to our attention in Panse (2009) that in many cases, quite a few of the problems that cause marital separation and divorce have existed in the couple's relationship before they got married. These problems were either not acknowledged or were ignored in the fond hope that marriage might offer a miraculous panacea. Clarke-Stewart and Bretano (2006) explained the traditional "fault-based" view of divorce, to be where an "innocent and injured" spouse seeks to obtain relief from the spouse who had done "a wrong" (p. 7). A broad spectrum of problems is noted below as probable causes for parental separation and divorce.

2.3.1 Financial problems

Financial problems in a marriage are related to money or aspects pertaining thereof which is a possible cause of disagreements between couples. According to Van Velsen (2008), statistics show that financial difficulties came to the forefront in most divorce

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cases which were filed for the latter half of 2007 and early 2008. In adding further clarification to this aspect, Payne (2010) stated that the jest of the problem lies in the fact that many couples fail to openly discuss their financial situations before marriage, which may lead to partners having differing attitudes towards finances. These financial issues include information pertaining to the couple's individual spending habits, salary information, debt status, financial responsibilities, financial status and lack of financial support (Payne, 2010; Perry, 2010; Rowd, 2008).

Moreover, Payne (2010) noted that a common situation is one from a wife who was socialised to believe that the husband is the breadwinner, while the husband believes that they should share financial responsibilities. A slightly different view is noted in Weston (2010) whereby it is stated that financial problems are part of the mix, but to pick them out and say they are a great cause of separation and divorce is premature.

Conclusively, Glee (2010) noted that if a couple is struggling with issues pertaining to money, it often leads to stress, which can put a great strain on the marriage. Many couples may fail to resolve issues regarding their finances and to a much further extent may not be willing to compromise in order to solve the problem.

2.3.2   Abuse

According to Rowd (2008), abuse in a marriage may come in the form of sexual abuse or emotional abuse. Drug and alcohol abuse, as well as excessive gambling, which could be detrimental to the marriage, may also be used as a form of abuse. It is further stated in Inglish (2002) that a spouse's unwillingness even to communicate in a fictional, non-abusive manner is a serious problem and can be noted as verbal abuse.

In relation to alcohol abuse, Clarke-Stewart and Bretano (2006) claimed that numerous studies have documented an association between divorce and alcohol consumption, demonstrating that people who drink are more likely to report that their alcohol abuse,

along with their drug and spousal abuse, contributed to their marital separation and divorce. In conjunction to this, Malenowski, Broman and Lewis (as cited in Levinger & Moles, 1979) revealed a significant relationship between disrupted marriages and multiple hospitalisations for acute alcoholic psychoses. Keeping the above-mentioned information in mind, it is noted by the researcher that abuse in a marriage is a contributing factor towards marital divorce.

2.3.3   Incompatibility

There are numerous kinds and forms of incompatibility that may lead to separation and divorce. Rowd (2008) stated that in some cases couples may not be able to find a common ground sexually, intellectually or emotionally between each other. Their marriage situations become unbearable and they are unable to live life with someone they cannot relate to. Johnson (1988) further placed emphasis on the fact that couples with personality differences and poor communication often expressed the need to find happier situations. Personality differences led to flaws in the relationship. In their search for happier situations, they turned to separation and divorce as a solution. On a more positive note, Rubin (as cited in Levinger & Moles, 1979) claimed that people tend to be most attracted to one another if they are similar or equally matched on a variety of social, physical and intellectual characteristics and attitudes.

2.3.4   Sexual problems

As humans we are driven by biological desires and needs to be physically intimate. Sexual problems in a couple's marriage can also lead to separation and divorce. According to Johnson (1988), sexual problems are commonly reported as the reason for separation and divorce. Reports range from vague references to sexual difficulties to a change in sexual orientation. Despite many people saying that physical intimacy is not as important as emotional, spiritual or family intimacy; the fact is that sexual problems or lack of sexuality in a marriage is still a top reason for separation or divorce

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(Payne, 2010). Rowd (2008) stated that sexual dysfunction or sexual disinterest may begin after couples tie the knot. If a couple is unable to resolve this problem, it may become a reason for separation or divorce.

The nature of sexual problems in a marriage may be due to sexual dysfunction or sexual disinterest. Sexual dysfunction refers to a difficulty experienced by an individual or a couple during any stage of normal sexual activity (Wikipedia, 2010). However, sexual disinterest can be twofold. Spoor (1999) stated that the first type is hypoactive desire; which is basically a disinterest in sexual activity. The second type is an aversion to sex; whereby sexual activity actually repulses the person or makes them unusually apprehensive.

2.3.5 Marital infidelity

In close correlation to sexual problems experienced in a marriage, is the problem of marital infidelity. Rowd (2008) explained the concept of marriage. The law on marriage is that it is common in monogamous societies and that marriage must be a mutually exclusive arrangement between two parties. It was further stated in Inglish (2002) that marriage vows and its acceptance thereof is life-long and permanent. However, cases of abuse and infidelity lead to marriage vows becoming null and void.

Glee (2010) further explained that infidelity is a common cause of separation and divorce, whereby more often than not, it is the man in the relationship that cheats and has another romantic liaison going on behind his wife's back. Ahrons and Rodgers (1987) added that the norms and fidelity in marriage are still quite powerful, despite the prevalence of extra-marital affairs. Establishing any kind of relationship with a new partner, no matter how "platonic" invokes these norms.

In accordance to the above-mentioned information, Clarke-Stewart and Bretano (2006) stated that having an affair is the ultimate insult to a marriage and one of the most

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common and consistent causes of separation and divorce. However, it is further noted that an extra-marital relationship may be a symptom of an unhappy relationship which provides the proverbial „last straw" in the decision to separate or divorce.

Some marital offences such as adultery and desertion are seen as symptoms of the breakdown in the emotional quality of the marriage (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987, p. 15). To a much further extent, studies conducted by Goode (1956), Harmsworth and Minnis (1955), Kephart (1955), Levinger (1966a) and Locke (1951) as cited in Levinger & Moles (1979) lend support to the fact that infidelity appears to play a part in separation and divorce which is common among younger couples. The attractiveness of remarriage and alternate sexual liaisons may account for reasons for separation and divorce among young couples.

Conclusively, Payne (2010) added that many couples work through a cheating occurrence, whereas some allow for open relationships but in general many marriages do fall apart due to infidelity as it greatly blocks the communication pathway between spouses.

2.3.6 Communication problems

It is important to note that most of the above-mentioned problems ultimately lead to communication problems and distancing of partners which in due course decreases the value of marriage. According to Rowd (2008), communication problems between couples may possibly exist long before they tie the knot. Expectations may not have been made clear or certain issues that could affect a marriage were not brought up. Discussing feelings about aspects that are personally important is also crucial but may not always be practised by couples.

In keeping with Rowd (2008), Perry (2010) also believed that communication problems may prevail from the time the couple got married but adds that they just had not realised

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it at that moment. Each partner may not be able to meet the expectations the other has of them. Moreover, Panse (2009) stated that lack of communication is one of the leading causes of divorce. A marriage is on the rocks when the lines of communication fail. Couples cannot have an effective relationship if either one of them would not discuss their feelings, talk about mutual or personal issues, keep resentments simmering under wraps and expect his/her partner to guess what the whole problem is about.

Conclusively, Clarke-Stewart and Bretano (2006) stated that the major reason for marital breakdown in as many as half of all divorces is conflict between spouses. Non-regulated couples take longer to rebound from a conflict and are less likely to achieve a solution to the problem leading to the reoccurrence of the conflict.

2.4   Emotional Experiences of Adolescents of Divorced Parents

American Psychological Association (1979) defines Emotional development as gradual increase in the capacity to experience, express, and interpret the full range of emotions and in the ability to cope with them appropriately. Emotional Development of a person refers to the rising ability of the individual to understand one's own and other's emotions, to be ab le to show emotions appropriately and deal with the emotions. According to Twort (2009) emotions are not present ready -made from birth. Like any other sector of the human personality, they have to develop. Emotional development occurs because of maturation and learning and not to either one alone. Emotionally, adolescents are in a stage of egocentricity (Erikson, 1982:37). They are preoccupied by their own thoughts, and also tend to believe that these thoughts are the focus of attention for other people. While they begin to take responsibility for their own actions and to accept the consequences of their behaviour, they are also preoccupied with their own needs and interests (Whiteman, 2007). Parental divorce may cause adolescents to develop unconscious beliefs that place the responsibility for the marital discord and

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separation squarely on their shoulders. Personalising the divorce stimulates feelings of guilt causing great emotional pain and may seriously damage feelings of self-esteem. In addition, divorce itself evokes feelings of shock, fear, anger and sadness, which may manifest consciously or remain below the level of awareness for the adolescent (Weston, 2010).

Willoughby, Carroll, Vitas, and Hill, (2012) asserts that adolescents might feel anxious about leaving the family home, and their turbulent emotions often include feeling blamed for the divorce, unloved by the parent who moved out, feelings of being denied or not cared for, scared, fearful and traumatised, and also feel the pressure of parents' needs and confusion. Additionally, they could feel embarrassed, ashamed and blame the parents for shattering their lives (Willoughby, et. al., 2012). Wolchik, Christopher, Tein, Rhodes, and Sandler (2019) emphasises that the reactions and responses of children are age-dependent. Wolchik, et. al. (2019) confirm that divorce brings enormous emotional upheaval for children and clarify that "children experience a wide range of emotional reactions, including sadness, anger, loneliness, depression, heightened anxiety, worry, lower life satisfaction, lower self-esteem and self-confidence, fear, yearning, rejection, conflicting loyalties, and a sense of fault for their parents' problems".

The main focus in adolescence is to find your identity, undergo physical changes, and meet the sometimes unrealistic expectations from society. When adolescents experience conflict because of the divorce, it adds confusion to this already tumultuous stage. Therefore, Zajonc (2011) state that adolescents might go through their young adulthood with distorted views of emotional relationships. The discussion has shown the extent of the feelings and emotions that teenagers might experience during the post-divorce phase of their parents. In addition, Wolchik, et. al. (2019) says that adolescents might also fear future relationships, whether it can endure and be satisfying.

Circumstances such as divorce may lead to faulty emotional development in the adolescent child (Thompson, & Henderson, 2007). Children who have experience divorce of their parents face emotional challenges not only at the time of divorce but throughout their life even in their own relationships they may indulge in the near future. The reason being that, divorce can bring several types of emotions to the forefront for a family, and the children involved are no different (Naylor, 2000). Feelings of loss, anger, confusion, anxiety, and many others, all may come from this transition. Divorce can leave children feeling overwhelmed and emotionally sensitive. In some cases, where teenagers feel overwhelmed and do not know how to respond to the affects they feel during divorce, they may become angry or irritable. Their anger may be directed at a wide range of perceived causes. McLanahan, and Gary (2014) argue that teenagers processing divorce may display anger at their parents, themselves, their friends, and others. While for many teenagers this anger dissipates after several weeks, if it persists, it is important to be aware that this may be a lingering effect of the divorce on teenagers. Teenagers often wonder why a divorce is happening in their family. They will look for reasons, wondering if their parents no longer love each other, or if they have done something wrong.

Martin (2012) contends that, adolescent may lose confidence, blame themselves for the break-up, and see their parent's separation or divorce in a complicated way thereby altering their emotions. The range of feelings that adolescent may encounter include: disbelief and denial, sadness, loss, loneliness, depression, anger, anxiety, fear, relief, and hope. Response to these feelings often results in different levels of intensity (Martin, 2012). While some adolescent may experience mild anxiety and sadness, others may feel more intense emotions.

Mancillas (2009) posit that, when there is divorce automatically there is separation between the two couples. This separation goes a long way to affect the children concern. The first is the physical separation where the child is separated either from the mother or the father depending on the agreement the former couple may reached. This obviously affect the child's emotion in that, the child might not get to stay with his or her preferred parent. Apart from the physical separation, the next has to do with emotional separation. The emotional separation starts before the declaration or pronouncement of divorce by concerned body. Feelings of failure, anger, frustration, fear and relief of the discomfort may be experiences the child will be seeing in his or her everyday life (Martin, 2012). After separation, the emotional effect may or may not aggravate with context divorce that can change the way of living. In addition, the separation of child from one parent shows the devastating and traumatic effects of divorce on children.

2.5   Effects of Divorce on Social Lives of Adolescents

Studies have shown that, whenever there is divorce it directly affect the social life of the children. Emery and Kelly (2003) reported that, though divorce affect all the children however, the scholar opines that, it affect the adolescent child than all the other children. According to the scholar, when the children are young, they don't feel the pain likewise, when the children have grown, they hardly experience any direct impact. However, the opposite becomes the case when the children are in their adolescent stage (Emery, & Kelly, 2003). Adolescents living in divorce households are more likely to act out antisocially, display aggression towards authority, engage in sexual activity, and have difficulty interacting with peers. These types of behavior have all been shown to be higher within divorced families (Hoyt 1990; Nilzon, 1997; Vadewater, 1998; Jeynes, 2002). It is hard to say what is the direct cause of these antisocial behaviors but social

scientists speculate that they are in part a result of decreased parental-child interaction. It has been shown that parental involvement, supervision, and overall support for their children often decrease within single and divorced households. As a result, children experiencing divorce may show increased tardiness and absenteeism and their performance in academics likely decreases (Jaynes, 2002).

In terms of mental health and well-being, case studies and other analysis have shown an increase in depression and anxiety in children of divorce (Jesinski, 2003). Both teachers and parents rated children from divorced households to be more significantly depressed and anxious than their counterparts from intact two-parent households (Hoyt, Cowen, Pedro-Carroll, & Alpert-Gillis, 1990). Feelings of insecurity and low self-esteem are also significantly present in children after divorce (Glenn & Kramer, 1985). On average, the social lives of adolescents from happy married families is slightly higher than adolescents from divorced families (Hetherington, 1999). In addition to these short-term social effects, numerous studies have shown that there are also long-term effects. For instance, adolescents from divorced households are also more likely to divorce than others (Glenn & Shelton, 1983). Statistical analysis of several surveys has also revealed significant negative long-term effects on psychological well-being like happiness, satisfaction and excitement long after childhood (Glenn & Shelton, 1985). However, these negative occurrences associated with divorce could be in part due to a selection effect for these types of negative outcomes. For example, it might be the case that these negative outcomes such as anxiety and poor school performance are a function of high conflict households which eventually obtain divorces. These characteristics many times manifest before the divorce even occurs (Piketty, 2003). In which case, it could be argued that, facilitating divorce actually reduces the long-term negative consequences of high-conflict households by allowing easy separation and

more amicable interaction in the long run. In this way divorce may improve the well-being of a child, if it leads to a decrease in hostility and stress between parents (Amato, 1993).

Furthermore, these negative effects are compounded by the fact that divorce is associated with socioeconomic factors which influence adolescents' demeanor (De Galeano & Vuri, 2004). Some argue that low socioeconomic status is a probable cause of both divorce and child problems. However, it has been shown that the net economic consequences of divorce, such as an average decline in the standard of living of single mothers who were dependent on a husband's income, (Weitzman, 1985 & Gruber, 2000) does indeed affect the mental and physical well-being of adolescents' post-divorce regardless of pre-divorce socioeconomic status.

In light of these findings it is important to note that a significant number of adolescents from divorced families are emotionally well adjusted and have no long-term social deficits (Kelly & Emery, 2003). The differences in social lives of adolescents between divorced and non-divorced families, while significant, are really not that large (Amato, 1999). This is due to the fact that there is a great deal of variability in adolescents' emotional reaction to divorce due to internal factors. For instance, there are documented gender differences in children's response to the stress of divorce, specifically indicating that boys are more likely to experience behavioural outcomes while girls are more likely to experience psychological outcomes (Kowaleski-Jones & Dunifon, 2004). There is ultimately however a degree of consensus that divorce itself has a negative impact on children even if it is on average small.

2.5 Effect of divorce on the academic life of the adolescent,

Divorce is difficult for all members of the family. However, for teenage children, trying to understand the changing dynamics of the family may leave them distracted and confused. This interruption in their daily focus can mean one of the effects of divorce on teenage children would be seen in their academic performance. The more distracted children are, the more likely they are to not be able to focus on their school work. Mancillas (2009) argues that, adolescent of divorced parents may exhibit the following problems which intend may affect the child's academic life.

- large amounts of anger, directed both toward others and themselves
- frequent breaking of rules
- sleep problems
- defying parents or teachers
- frequent guilt
- increasing isolation or withdrawal from friends and family
- drug and/or alcohol abuse
- early sexual activity
- thoughts of suicide or violence

Adolescent who experience the divorce of their parents generally are more likely to struggle socially compared to children from intact families (Mainoo, 2008). They are more likely to be aggressive, have poorer relationships with same-age children, and have fewer close friends which obviously may lead to poor academic performance. Mainoo asserts that, children learn best with and from their peers hence a break of trust between them may warrant their poor performance academically. Also, teenagers from broken homes according to Louw, Van Ede, and Louw (2004) appear to be less

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involved in extracurricular activities, such as sports or music, and other enrichment programs, such as after-school classes or summer programs. This is likely due to less money to pay for such activities, less availability of parents to drive the child and attend to such lessons.

Children and teenagers who experience the divorce of their parents may end up getting less parental supervision (Landsberg, 2005). As a result, some scholars believe that these children may be more susceptible to the influence of their peers and this increases the chances of them getting involved in deviant behavior, including drug and alcohol use and smoking. According to Landsberg (2005) there are many contributing factors that impact children who have experienced divorce: the age and gender of the child at the time of the separation, the level of collaboration among the divorced or separated parents, and the intensity of conflict within the family. All of these factors may influence the mental health of the child, and additionally may influence the child's academics. Poor attendance, decline in grades, and inability to concentrate are often warning signs that may show up in the classroom. Teachers may observe these behaviors and refer the child to the school counselor for help. When children experience the trauma of divorce, their emotional state may impact interactions with their classmates (Kunz, 2000). Students may wish to have alone-time to reflect and think about life at home. Other students may choose one or two close friends with whom they can identify and with whom they trust to talk to about the divorce. Children of divorced parents may also see a change in academic success.

According to (Kunz, 2000). children adjust more effectively, learn successfully, and misbehave least when home and school are both consistent, predictable and proactive in meeting the child's needs. A significant predictor of the child's academic success is

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continuing a consistent, cooperative, and beneficial relationship with both parents. Some one-parent families can also put children at risk for academic difficulty. Children who struggle in the classroom may encounter themes related to grieving over their parents' separation, concern about financial problems at home, or living in stressful or emotionally' tense households.

Kowaleski-Jones and Dunifon, (2004) found children who have experienced a recent divorce in their family may have more difficulty academically at school than children from intact families. Children from one-parent families may have more difficulty adapting their behavior to teacher expectations than children from two-parent households. Teachers reported negative behavioral changes in two-thirds of the children after divorce. These changes consisted of an increase in impatience, inattentiveness, unhappiness, lack of concentration, and more need for attention from their teacher.

Teachers may have pessimistic views concerning children from single-parent families (Knox, 2016). In some cases teachers might expect negative behavior from one-parent children and react to their behavior issues in a negative way. Teachers may also perceive children's intellectual ability in a stereotypical way as well, and teachers may also expect less from children who have encountered a parental divorce, according to Stedman. According to Knox (2016) children may experience mood changes, anger and frustration while at school and children from divorced parents may be more disorderly in class, have less proficiency in study habits, and be tardy or absent more frequently than children from two-parent families. Children in one-parent families may have more household tasks and chore responsibilities adding to their stress level than children from two-parent families. According to the researcher children who have behavior problems

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in the classroom tend to show less quality work in the classroom and have more unfinished homework assignments. Knox further found children in a single parent family may be more likely to underachieve due to the anxiety related to the major changes within the family.

Kirby and Dean (2002) state that in most of the studies done on academic performance of students, it is not surprising that social economic status is one of the major factors studied while predicting academic performance. According the Kirby and Dean when parents are together, they amass their financial resources together and make plans for the family including their wards' education. This bond makes their plans for their children's education materialised because they plan and make provisions for that. However, when there is divorce, there is not just separation of the couples but they don't team up on financial matters again. The scholars contend that; divorce has always burdened one parent instead of the two sharing the financial cost. In this instance, the child is mostly denied some privileges and this may affect him or her academically (Kim, Roth, & Wollburg, 2015).

2.7 Coping Strategies used by Adolescents of Divorced Parents

Coping is defined as the thoughts and behaviours mobilised to manage the internal and external stressful situations (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). It is a term used distinctively for conscious and voluntary mobilisation of acts, different from 'defense mechanisms' that are subconscious or unconscious adaptive responses, both of which aim to reduce or tolerate stress (Venner, 1998).

When individuals are subjected to a stressor, the varying ways of dealing with it are termed 'coping styles', which are a set of relatively stable traits that determine the individual's behaviour in response to stress. These are consistent over time and across

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situations (de Boer, Buwalda & Koolhaas, 2017). Generally, coping is divided into reactive coping (a reaction following the stressor) and proactive coping (aiming to neutralise future stressors). Proactive individuals excel in stable environments because they are more routinised, rigid, and are less reactive to stressors, while reactive individuals perform better in a more variable environment (Coppens, de Boer & Koolhaas, 2010).

Coping scales measure the type of coping mechanism a person exhibits. The most commonly used scales are COPE (Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced), Ways of Coping Questionnaire, Coping Strategies Questionnaire, Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations, Religious-COPE, and Coping Response Inventory (Kato, 2015).

Coping is generally categorised into four major categories which are (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004):

1. Problem-focused, which addresses the problem causing the distress: Examples of this style include active coping, planning, restraint coping, and suppression of competing activities.

2. Emotion-focused, which aims to reduce the negative emotions associated with the problem: Examples of this style include positive reframing, acceptance, turning to religion, and humour.

3. Meaning-focused, in which an individual uses cognitive strategies to derive and manage the meaning of the situation

4. Social coping (support-seeking) in which an individual reduces stress by seeking emotional or instrumental support from their community.

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Many of the coping mechanisms prove useful in certain situations. Some studies suggest that a problem-focused approach can be the most beneficial; other studies have consistent data that some coping mechanisms are associated with worse outcomes (Stoeber & Janssen, 2011; (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). Maladaptive coping refers to coping mechanisms that are associated with poor mental health outcomes and higher levels of psychopathology symptoms. These include disengagement, avoidance and emotional suppression (Compas, Jaser, Bettis, Watson, Gruhn, Dunbar, Williams & Thigpen, 2017).

The physiology behind different coping styles is related to the serotonergic and dopaminergic input of the medial prefrontal cortex and the nucleus accumbens (Koolhaas, de Boer, Coppens & Buwalda, 2010). The neuropeptides vasopressin and oxytocin also have an important implication relative to coping styles. On the other hand, neuroendocrinology involving the level of activity of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenocortical axis, corticosteroids, and plasma catecholamines were unlikely to have a direct causal relationship with an individual's coping styles (Sánchez, Rice, Stein, Milburn & Rotheram-Borus, 2010).

For some adolescents a failure to cope with the divorce of their parents can be characterized by regressive behaviours and early sexual activity (Kirby & Dean, 2002). Affirmation, respect and trust as mediators of stress among adolescents. Affirmation, respect and trust are displayed in actions that demonstrate to family members they are valued and supported within the family. Communication where sharing is regular and that is direct, arms a family to better cope with any conflict. Taking responsibility for one's actions involves contributing to the running of the home chores and responsible behaviour. This is influenced by morality, a code of ethics and a strong spiritual

orientation, which places the family within a larger purpose. Rituals and Traditions instill a strong sense of "who we are, where we come from and where we are going".

Also, crisis management can be used *as* coping mechanism of stress among adolescents. Crisis management is the ability of the family to unite in the face of challenges and surmount the obstacles. A family that is able to realize when it needs help and asks for it is a strong family. Spending time together as a family, playing, relaxing and enjoying each other makes members feel valued and worthwhile. Finally, Strong et al. (2005) say that a strong family is one that has a wellness orientation, seeking ways and resources that will produce optimal health in all areas of life, i.e. physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual and social.

Furthermore, identity development stage resolution can be used by adolescents as a coping mechanism after parental divorce. Divorce and its related transitions have a direct impact on adolescents and may be particularly challenging for the adolescents who is similarly undergoing critical developmental changes (Hines, 1997). In addition, life crisis such as the divorce or the remarriage of their parents may amplify the adolescent's challenge relating to normal developmental tasks. These crises may also promote a host of other potentially stressful changes in the larger social milieu in which they grow up: Such as changes in schools, in neighbourhoods, in their relations with extended families and peers, as well as in their economic circumstances. As a result, adolescents sometimes depend on their peers as a way of coping these challenges (Hines, 1997).

More so, strong families as buffers of stress among adolescents is another coping mechanism adolescent use as a result of parental divorce. Cumulative family instability is associated with problem behaviour, early sexual involvements, early childbearing and low cognitive and academic achievement, poor outcomes such as these are not often

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automatic, but are dependent on intervening variables, referred to as moderators or buffers. Strong families should then be presented as buffers of stress to explore the possible influence of adolescent's well-being.

Strong et al. (2005) have collated a list of characteristics that mark a strong family that they have gleaned from various researches. They are: (1) commitment; (2) affirmation, respect and trust; (3) communication; (4) responsibility, morality and spiritual orientation; (5) rituals and traditions; (6) crisis management; (7) ability to seek help; (8) spending time together; and (9) a family wellness orientation. Commitment is characterised by a strong sense of identity with the family unit.

Additionally, high level of motivation as buffers of stress among adolescents could be used as a coping mechanism among adolescents experiencing parental divorce. A high level of motivation to work towards success, solve problems and defend any threats to the family is present. Similarly, adjustment patterns in step-families as buffers of stress among adolescents can be used as a coping mechanism among adolescents experiencing parental divorce (Kirby & Dean, 2002).

Accounts of children in step-families and single-parent families reveal more negative stress in their lives. Their adjustment difficulties and behavioural problems may be attributed to their reaction to stress. Adjustment difficulties for step children may be seen within the normal range for such behaviours, thus not suggesting a need for clinical intervention unless the behaviour continues for an extensive period. According to Amato (2000), it might be difficult to reach broad generalisations about the role of parental remarriage in the adolescent's adjustment. Some children may experience a re-emergence of problems during the adolescent developmental life phase. Eventually most children adapt successfully to this new life transition and have no ill effects.

Several factors have been identified which may contribute to how well children adjust to a step-family. For Kirby and Dean (2002) it included multiple factors such as gender of custodial parent, parenting style, marital status, parent-child relationships, and the amount of contact with the non-custodial parent. Lofquist (1993) identified that the following factors do affect children's adjustment in step-families: the child's gender, the age of the child, individual differences in temperament, intelligence, behavioural patterns, and parenting factors.

The effects of remarriage vary with children's ages, children's gender, and the time since divorce and other factors. Researchers such as Hetherington and Kelly (2002); Hetherington and Stanley-Hagan (2002) found that 20% of children from step-families showed adjustment problems compared to 10% in families that never divorced. Kirby and Dean (2002) wrote that most children of divorced or remarried parents experience adjustment problems during the first two years of the newly formed family structure. Several factors are discussed below in more detail: namely, the child's gender, the child's age, parent-child relationships, sibling relationships, and personal resources.

In furtherance, parental control and management is a strong predictor of the adjustment a child makes to divorce and remarriage. According to Buchanan et al. (1996), this refers to the parents' awareness of the adolescent's activities and the maintenance of an organised home. It refers to regular routines and rules for things such as meal times, doing chores, bedtime, television (TV) watching or visiting with friends. If these routines and rules were consistent and the household was well managed it results in less substance abuse, anti-social behaviour and deviance. It also aided in a positive adjustment and the general well-being of the child.

Sibling relationships make a significant difference in the adjustment of children in step-families. The presence of half or step siblings show a higher rate of adjustment

problems than those families who are without such siblings. The adolescent may be angry of the intrusion of other children into their life. Another contributing factor is increased conflict between siblings during the early period of the new step-family. A third contributing factor is likely to be parental differential treatment of siblings. Poor sibling relationships appear to increase adjustment problems over time.

Contrary to these associations between siblings and poor adjustment, there is also evidence that sibling relationships can play a positive role in step children adjustment. Key qualities of the relationship are showing affection, being supportive, offering acceptance and their influence can act as a protective factor (Graham-Berman, unpublished). More generally, not only siblings but grandparents and other adults play a more significant part in the adjustment of children and adolescents in step-families. Perhaps it is because custodial biological parents are more distant and disengaged with their children during the early stages of remarriage (Graham-Berman, unpublished).

Besides, personal resources and positive skills as buffers of stress among adolescents. Another important factor to consider is what personal resources and positive skills the adolescent brings to assist them in their adjustment to the step-family (Buchanan, 1996). These include conflict resolution styles, close relationships with others and involvement in other interests. In conflict resolution one considers whether the adolescent resolves conflict through compromise and discussion, through aggression, through avoidance or through engagement in extra-curricular activities. Those who show the best adjustment are the children who apply a constructive conflict strategy such as compromise.

According to Buchanan et al. (1996), a close relationship with a friend is a strong source of support to the adolescent in stressful situations. Engagement in activities that the child enjoys such as sport and music reward the child with pleasure and satisfaction and

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meaningfully occupies their time. In turn this helps them in the adaptation process. Academic and social competence has also been noted as an asset making children more resilient and better able to cope with stress.

Step-families face the difficult challenge of integrating all the new members of the step-family into a working unit and have them adjust to all the new boundaries and rules. While it can be challenging, there are ways to have a successful transition. Louw et al. (2004) recommended that step-families who wish to make positive adjustments to the reconstituted family need to keep the following in mind: have realistic expectations for the new relationships and, to allow time for adjustment before loving relationships can be formed between step-parents and step children. It will be unrealistic for step-families to expect to continue where the original family left off. Step-families have to form new norms, traditions, develop new communication styles, their own disciplinary techniques, and find their own problem-solving strategies. It would be advisable for the step-parent not to compete with the biological parent, but assume a different position. Again, the adolescents' social environments and family values, school, and peer group interact powerfully in influencing their lives. A large number of adolescents have to cope with various problems, such as the pressures of schooling, meeting peer demands. Apart from these, more and more children and adolescents are confronted with the break-up of their families by divorce and the building of new relationships with step-families (Keats, 2001).

Adolescents learn best to cope with changes caused by remarriage when parents show sensitivity to their child's needs. The parent-child relationship following a divorce and remarriage is critical to the child's adjustment. Although it is painful not being with both parents, it is in maintaining meaningful relationships with their parents that help children cope. Parents need to guard against criticizing the other parent in front of the

child. Because when there is on-going conflict between their parents' children tend to have long-term adjustment difficulties.

To facilitate a child's adjustment, parents can help their children by exercising good parenting skills, and by providing them with a warm, understanding, nurturing, and stable home environment. Parents can also provide a consistent stress-free visitation arrangement with the non-custodial parent. The child is likely to have adjustment problems if frequent contact occurs in undesirable circumstances. The quality of parent-child relationships, the family environment and family structure have a significant impact on children and adolescents' development in many domains. It has been found that family environments influence children and adolescent's active coping behaviours. Families that model low conflict, cohesiveness, and are communicative, often have children who more frequently use active coping behaviours and show less problem responses when dealing with stressful life events.

The benefit of supportive parent-child relationships may assist children to move past obstacles and challenges through using effective coping behaviours (Zimmer-Gembeck & Locke, 2007). Adolescents, who have more positive relationships with their parents, use fewer avoidance strategies and less wishful thinking when they have problems at home. Other factors which also influence how well children adjust are the child's age, gender and temperament. Children who have a 'difficult' temperament struggle to adjust if the child's parents have difficulty coping with stress and the demands of life. Parents who manage to have fewer disruptions and establish a stable routine contribute to the child's ability to cope. Another coping method for adolescents is that family roles must be restructured and new identities need to be forged.

Parents can support the adolescent by telling others about their divorce and remarriage making it easy for children to connect with supporting networks such as understanding

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teachers and grandparents, to name a few. (Hetherington et al., 1989). While another recent study of United States young adult by Ruiz and Silverstein (2007), found that close and supportive relationships with grandparents reduced depressive symptoms especially among young people whose families of origin were absent of a parent (Kennedy & Kennedy, 1993). Related studies by Lussier et al. (2002), Ruiz and Silverstein (2007) confirmed these findings, they showed that close relationships with grandparents following parental separation were associated with fewer adjustment problems among young people. Child's adjustment is enhanced also by the following:

1. Prior to the remarriage, parents need to discuss it with the child,

2. Answer the child's questions,

3. Read age appropriate books with the child,

4. Reassure the child of their love,

5. Be consistent in their parenting,

6. Do not interrogate children about their visits with another parent,

7. Most importantly be sensitive to the child's emotional needs.

Adolescents who cope successfully after the divorce and remarriage of their parents are those children who work through the trauma. This involves going through the normal grieving process, experiencing denial, anger and depression and finally coming to a point of acceptance, focusing on the future, taking responsibility for their actions, and acting with integrity (Whiteman, 2007).

One study found that children who use active coping skills (such as problem solving and gathering social support) tend to adjust to divorce more quickly than children who rely on avoidance or distraction as coping mechanisms. Children's social support from peers was positively related to adjustment, being a protective factor. Children who place some of the blame for the divorce on themselves tend to be more poorly adjusted.

Custody arrangements following divorce tend to show that children fare better under joint physical custody rather than sole mother or father custody.

According to Niolon (2003), step-families can manage change by considering visits to step-grandparents, rules imposed by ex-partners about parenting. Care about children's development and changing needs, integration of non-custodial children, and changing roles of parents and step-parents over time. Furthermore, looking into the unpredictable results of the numerous new relationships brought about by step-families, including people with different experiences, needs, and opinions. Ganong, Coleman and Jamison (2011) made the following suggestions for developing a closer relationship between the step child and step-parent:

1. "The step-parent should take a supportive role.

2. Allow the biological parent to do most of the disciplining.

3. The authoritative step-parenting style is best, showing increased warmth and flexible control.

4. Befriend step children and try to build close relationships with them before attempting to discipline them.

5. Step-parents should engage step children in activities that are supportive and fun until relational bonds are firmly established.

6. Show an interest in raising your partner's children".

Following these suggestions is likely to promote greater opportunities for bonding, and may help adolescents cope better in step-families. It is clear that step-parents, who invest more in their step children's lives, develop closer relationships with them. However, contrary to these findings, King (2007) pointed out that closeness to residential step-mothers was not related to adolescents' well-being. As more time together means more opportunities for conflict.

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2.8 Empirical Review

A study by D'Onofrio and Emery (2019) aimed to find out the emotional management between genders and the emotions shown by male and female students when faced with parental divorce. Studies show that divorce crises in families cause female students to feel more embarrassed than males. From the point of view of positive emotions, female adolescents show more positive emotions, namely love, compared to male students. Nevertheless, male students have happier emotions. In addition, male adolescents are more focused on negative emotions such as hate and anger than females. In terms of emotional expression, female students express less emotion than males. The results of the study found that the average respondent manages emotions with help from good friends and followed by help from mothers and counsellors.

Anderson (2014) also did a related study on the effect of divorced on students. The scholar found that majority of students' experience emotional stress and show symptoms of psychological disorders. According to the scholar, most students use positive ways, although some take negative actions such as smoking and taking drugs to deal with stress due to divorced parents. The scholar further asserts that students among divorced parents need support and communication between the child and both parents. Anderson opines that, the communication should aim to reconstruct the self-concept of children who have been distressed by the family crisis that has occurred. Support from close individuals according to Anderson (2014) also allows the student to be inclined to think positively and they can accept parental divorce as one of the unexpected events that one should anticipate in life.

In the study of Wolchik et al (2019), the findings show that children have a variety of emotions felt when parents' divorce. Among the feelings they showed was feeling insecure and thinking that their future would be bleak. They also show feelings of sadness, anger, loneliness and self – blame. When they feel less of the love given by

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their parents after a divorce, they will tend to show unstable emotions. This study also shows that the involvement of parents in motivating children as well as providing support between methods of managing children's emotions so that children can perform daily routines without limits. Parental involvement in children's emotions is very important because when a divorce occurs, the children still do not fully understand what is happening.

In a study done by Nazri et. Al (2019), it was demonstrated that children are affected by parent divorce. In addition, the correspondent's experience and viewpoint of the difficulties of divorce were different. However, t majority of the correspondents reported feeling anxious and unhappy shortly after their parents' divorce. Not only so, but the correspondent also concurred that the main difficulties following their parent's divorce were financial. Additionally, divorced children overcome their obstacles by asking for and accepting aid, caring for their physical health, and concentrating on solving issues rather than feeling helpless about them.

According to a study done by Strohschein (2005), it was indicated that children whose parents later divorce show higher levels of anxiety/depression and antisocial behavior than children whose parents remain married, even before the marriage has ended. However, there is no correlation between parental divorce itself and an increase in antisocial conduct or anxiety/depression in children. Although the poorer child mental health at the time of the initial interview among children whose parents later divorce is fully explained by controlling for predivorce parental socioeconomic and psychosocial resources, this does not explain the divorce-specific increase in anxiety/depression. Finally, a strong relationship between parental divorce and predivorce levels of family dysfunction implies that when marriages in highly dysfunctional homes are dissolved.

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In a study conducted by Golden & Henderson (2007), it was seen that children face severe consequences of divorce if they do not understand what all is happening around them in their family. The coping skills to deal with the situation also play very important role in determining the extent to which divorce can impact children.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0   Introduction

This chapter deals with the methodology adopted for the study. It discusses the philosophical underpinning, research approach, research design, study area, population, sample and sampling technique and data collection instrument. It further presents the trustworthiness of the interviews, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures and ethical issues.

3.1   Rational and Assumption for Qualitative Design

The study adopted naturalistic paradigm. Naturalism is philosophical position adopted by researchers who approach philosophy form purely scientific point of view (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Naturalistic researchers describe and measure behaviours of people as it occurs in their everyday lives (Bogdan & Biklen, 2013). Furthermore, naturalistic researchers believe that in the real world, events and phenomena cannot be singled out from the content as they are extricable related and understanding involves the interrelationships among all of the parts of the whole. Naturalistic research takes place in real-world settings and the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest (Bogdan & Biklen, 2013).

This paradigm was adopted because the researcher aimed at generalising the findings in relation to adolescents of divorced parents in Assin Township, Ghana (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Creswell and Creswell (2018) further argued that researchers who use naturalism paradigm do not attempt to generalise findings of the study to a universe beyond that bounded by the study. Moreover, the researcher purposed at the commencement of the study to allow issues that would emerge from the data collection

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to unfold as the study progresses, hence, the use of naturalism paradigm (Bogdan & Biklen, 2013). Again, the researcher had in mind to have a direct contact with the participants of the study during data collection process (Kusi, 2012). Moreover, the interview questions posed to solicit information enabled further deliberation by participants and thus allowed the study to uncover important information on the topic which helped in answering the research questions as argued by naturalistic researchers such as Kusi (2012).

The research study was qualitative in nature. O'Neill (2006) explained that qualitative research usually achieves a greater level of depth when fewer respondents are studied. Seeing that qualitative research methodologies allows "sensitive subjects to be approached in sensitive ways by allowing the researcher to employ personal skills to help lessen the difficulties of their subject matter adopting it for the topic of parental separation and divorce was appropriate" (O'Neill, 2006, p. 91),

Also, Denzin and Lincoln (2013) explained that by using qualitative research methods, researchers aim to gather rich data which provides an understanding of experiences of the respondents. This allows researchers the opportunity to study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of it in terms of the meanings the subjects bring to them. The researcher attempted to gain in-depth understanding of the respondents' experiences of coming from parental divorce hence framing the researcher's study within a qualitative research framework was appropriate.

Moreover, Henning (2004) asserted that in qualitative research studies the variables are usually not controlled because the freedom and natural development of action and representation is what the researcher is inclined to capture. Also, the qualitative researcher "collects words (text) and images (pictures) about the central phenomenon and this is collected from people immersed in the setting of everyday life in which the

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study is framed" (Maree, 2007, p. 98). Seeing that parental divorce, it was normal everyday life experiences for the respondents, by adapting this research approach, the researcher aimed to capture data that was a true reflection of their reality.

Also, Becker and Hedges (1992) explained that one of the major distinguishing characteristics of qualitative research is the fact that the researcher "attempts to understand people in terms of their own definition of their world which means that the focus is on an insider-perspective rather than an outsider-perspective" (p. 67). This qualitative approach therefore has the capacity to enable the researcher to explore the experiences of these adolescents from separated and divorced families by looking at their emotional experiences from their perspectives. This was upon these reasons that the study used qualitative research approach.

3.2   Type of Design

The study used phenomenological research design. According to Kusi (2012), phenomenological design can be used to explore the experiences of the respondents. Patton (2002) stated that phenomenological studies have become an important research method, especially in instances when one needs to understand specific phenomena in depth. Bogdan and Biklen (2013) also argued that "researchers in the phenomenological approach do not assume they know what things mean to the people they are studying but attempt to gain entry into the conceptual world of their subjects in order to understand how and what meaning they construct around events in their daily lives" (p. 23).

Patton (2002) noted that a phenomenological study is one that focuses on descriptions of what people experience and how they experience what they experience. A dimension of phenomenological design is the assumption that there is an essence to shared

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experience. Kusi (2012) also asserted that in a phenomenological study, there is the need to conduct an analysis of the experience so that the rudimentary elements of the experience that are common to members of a specific society can be identified. Kusi (2012) added that phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the everyday experiences of a group of people.

The researcher opted for phenomenology because the purpose of the study was to explore the emotional experiences of the adolescent of divorced parents. Since the study aimed at exploring the lived experiences of the participants the researcher saw the need to use phenomenology knowing very well that it is one of the research designs that can be used to study people's life experiences. Again, the choice of phenomenology enabled the researcher to get choose few participants and to study them in details. participants is a type of qualitative research design that aims to describe the perception, attitude, behaviour as well as experiences of individuals around a phenomenon.

3.3   Researcher's Role

The researcher was responsible for maintaining the rigor and credibility of various aspects of the research. First and foremost, the researcher was responsible for ensuring the integrity of the researcher. The researcher ensured integrity in the choice of design, methods, instruments, credibility, dependability, and transferability. The researcher relied on her honesty, competence and openness to ensure a credible study. Also, the researcher ensured effective monitoring and reduced bias. To reduce bias on the side of researcher, the researcher adopted a well-thought-through interview guide reminding herself of the errors likely to suffice in the collection of data or responses for the study. Furthermore, the researcher developed competency in method for effective data collection. The researcher ensure this by explaining the study without bias to participants, conducting interview according to design and interview guide, making

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appropriate field observation and analysing and interpreting data for the study. Finally, the researcher presented findings of the study by writing the project report avoiding biases and yet exercise professionalism in writing and presentation of report.

3.4   Site and Sample Selection

According to the Population and Housing Census (2021), the population of Assin North Municipality is 161341 representing 7.3 percent of the region's total population. Males constitute 49.7 percent and females represent 50.3 percent. About 63.1 percent) of the population reside in rural localities. The Municipality has a sex ratio (number males per 100 females) of 103.8. The youthful population (population less than 15 years) in the municipality account for 44.5 percent of the population giving depicting a broad base population pyramid which tapers off with a small number of elderly persons (population aged 60 years and older). The total age dependency ratio (dependent population to population in the working age) for the Municipality is 92.04, the age dependency ratio for males is higher (96.27) than that of females (87.84).

The Municipality has a household population of 157749 with a total number of 36317 households. The average household size in the Municipality is 4.3 persons. Children constitute the largest proportion of households and accounts for 44.5 percent. Spouses form about 10.6 percent of households. Nuclear households (head, spouse(s) and children) constitute 31.6 percent of the total number of households in the municipality. About four in ten (39.7 %) of the population aged 12 years and older are married, 40.1 percent have never married, 9.6 percent are in consensual unions, 4.5 percent are widowed, 8.4 percent are divorced and 1.7 percent are separated. By age 25-29 years, more than half of females (50.6%) are married compared to a little below one-third of males (29.7%). At age 65 and above, widowed females account for as high as 52.7 percent while widowed males account for only 10,8 percent. Among the married, 28.6

percent have no education while about 5.7 percent of the never married have never been to school. About 9 out of 10 of the married population (89.2%)) are employed, 1.0 percent are unemployed and 13.7 percent are economically not active. A greater proportion of those who have never married (56.7%) are economically not active with 2.0 percent unemployed.

About 76.5 percent of the populations aged 15 years and older are economically active while 23.5 per cent are economically not active. Of the economically active population, 97.8 percent are employed while 2.2 percent are unemployed. For those who are economically not active, a larger percentage of them are students (54.3 %), 22.9% perform household duties and 7.0 percent are disabled or too sick to work. Six out of ten (67.8%) unemployed are seeking work for the first time. Of the employed population, about 59.4 percent are engaged as skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers, 11.7 percent in service and sales, 13.9 percent in craft and related trade, and 6.8 percent are engaged as managers, professionals, and technicians. Of the population 15 years and older self-employed without employees (62.7) constitute the highest proportion of employment category in the municipality.

A sample of 7 (4 females and 3 males) adolescents experiencing parental divorce were used for the study. These adolescents were within the age bracket 12 to 20 years. The researcher believed that these adolescents will be able to describe their stories with regards to parental divorce. This sample was used because Akpan (2007) recommended that researchers conducting studies on divorce in the future make use of a sample number of less than eight respondents. This would allow for a more comprehensive study. It was therefore on the basis of this suggestion that the researcher used a relatively small sample in the research study. Furthermore, according to Creswell and Creswell (2018), five to twenty (5-25) respondents can be used for qualitative research.

Purposive, specifically maximum variation type of sampling technique was used to select respondents for the study. Rubin and Babbie (2005) explained that within the use of maximum variation type of purposive sampling, the researcher has the advantage to handpick key people who in his/her judgement best represents the range of those persons who would best know the needs of the subject/topic chosen. This point is reiterated by Maree (2007, p.178) explaining that this method of sampling is used in special situations where the sampling is done with a specific purpose in mind. Due to the use of type sampling, the data collected from the seven adolescents experiencing parental divorce were specific to their contexts and the researcher was not able to generalise any information to other adolescents experiencing the same problems.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), maximum variation type of purposive sampling is done to increase the utility of information obtained from the sample. The respondents selected were information rich respondents who were well-informed and had experienced the realms of coming from families where parents were divorced. It is further stated in Bless and Smith (1995) that the method of maximum variation type of purposive sampling is based entirely on the judgement of the researcher regarding the characteristics of the representative sample, or a sample composed of elements that contain the most characteristic, representative or conforming attributes of the population. It was in keeping with these characteristics that the researcher chose the method of purposive sampling for the research study. In order to obtain the required information, the researcher adopted maximum variation type of purposive sampling technique selected respondents from families where their parents were had divorced. The researcher intended to collect data from a mixed sample group of males and females.

3.5   Data Collection Technique

Semi-structured interview guide was used for data collection for the study. Semi-structured interview guide was appropriate in this research study in that in-depth information were derived and respondents could ask for clarification if they did not understand any of the questions. Moreover, according to Khuzwayo (2015), semi-structured interviews enable the respondents to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard the situation from their own point of view.

The researcher was able to provide clarity on certain questions that the respondents did not fully understand, especially in the case of some adolescents who were semi-literate. This led to a form of conversational interview, which Neuman (2011) described as a flexible technique based on the collaborative encounter model in which interviewers adjust the questions in line with specific respondents' understanding, but maintain the researcher's intent. Although the questions were mostly in the respondents' home language, the researcher was able to clarify and rephrase them where necessary. The interviews also gave some respondents a chance to vent their frustrations, wishes and concerns regarding the situation (experiences) they find themselves in.

The instrument was developed by the researcher in consultation with the supervisor. The interview guide had three sections: Sections A, B, C and D. Section A had items that focused on cognitive experiences of adolescents of divorced parents in Assin Fosu Township. Data from this section were used to answer research question one. Section B dealt with items that focused on coping strategies adopted by adolescents of divorced parents for their psychological experiences in Assin Fosu Township. Responses from this section were used to answer research question two. Furthermore, Section C had

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items that focused how divorce affected the social lives of adolescents in Assin Fosu Township. Data from this section were used to answer research question three.

3.6   Managing and Recording Data

Introductory letter from the Head, Department of Counselling Psychology, University, of Education, Winneba, was obtained to seek permission from gate keepers, parents/guardian and respondents. Thus, for respondents who were below 18 years, permission was sought from their parents/guardian since the researcher perceived them to be minors. One week from the day of presenting the permission letter was agreed upon by the researcher and respondents for the interviews. After securing the permission, preparations were made to conduct the interviews on the agreed date and time. The venue and time for the interviews were planned in advance and agreed upon by the researcher and respondents. In few cases where respondents could not make it to the pre-arranged venues, home visits were arranged.

Also, respondents were assured of confidentiality of their responses and that the information they provided would be used in a responsible way (for academic purposes only). They were further informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage should they wish to do so without prejudice. Moreover, respondents were also assured that precautions would be taken to protect their anonymity. For example, adolescents experiencing parental divorce were referred to using the letters (codes) such as AP: 1 to AP: 7. Interviews were personally conducted which took the face-to-face approach. Face-to-face interviews allowed the researcher to listen empathetically to the views of the interviewees and establish rapport. The advantage of individual face-to-face interviews over group interviews is that in group interviews, respondents may be influenced by others and may feel the need to conform.

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Interviews were guided by the prepared semi-structured interview guide. Questions were asked in the respondents' preferred language (English language for literates and Twi language for semi-literate and illiterates) to ensure good understanding by all respondents and to avoid sample bias. In order to avoid boredom, the interviews took 20 minutes for each of the respondents. Respondents were asked similar questions and probes were used for all respondents. Audio recording only commenced after obtaining respondents' permission. Likewise, the researcher did not record the stories of respondents who did not permit the researcher to do so. Also, field notes were taken in the form of jotted notes as the interviews continued.

3.7   Trustworthiness of the data collection instruments

According to Owu-Ewie (2018), the term trustworthiness can be used in place of the terms dependability and validity while doing qualitative research. Creswell and Creswell (2018) also stated that steps should be taken during the research process to ensure rigor in a qualitative study, and they provided the following strategies as examples: ensuring methodological coherence, researcher responsiveness, ensuring appropriateness of sample, and active analytical stance. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the degree to which the researcher's and participants' interpretations of the data obtained have the same meaning is what constitutes validity in qualitative research. Credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability were the four constructs that the researcher used to ensure the study's reliability. According to some authors (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), these constructs correspond to internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity in quantitative research, respectively.

3.7.1 Credibility

Credibility is about a study's internal validity and it signifies how a study's results correlate with reality (Bryman, 2008). There are numerous ways to increase the credibility of a research, according to Merriam (2009) triangulation, member check, adequate engagement in data collection, researcher position and peer review are some of the things that help to achieved credibility in a qualitative research. In ensuring credibility, the researcher did peer review on the research instrument. The interview guide was given to colleagues pursuing the same cause to go through and make necessary corrections. It was later on given to my supervisors to vet. Corrections from the supervisor help to finalize the interview guide.

3.7.2 Transferability

The external validity of qualitative research is what researchers refer to as transferability. It describes the degree to which a study's findings can be applied to studies that share similar features (Merriam, 2009). Though qualitative research does not intend to generalize it results, it is however believed that other researchers stand a great chance of benefiting from the findings of a qualitative research that shares related research questions in a similar context. Contrary to generalization which means the findings of a given study can be generalized across all environments relevant to the context being studied, transferability deals with researchers connecting the findings in related settings and situations outside the scope of the preliminary study (Jensen, 2008). To ensure transferability, the researcher made sure that she presented enough extract to back her findings.

3.7.3 Dependability

This discusses the stability of data over time. Dependability as a concept concerns itself with how a study's results will be replicable or repeatable with time (Bryman, 2008).

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In ensuring dependability, the researcher made sure that she followed strictly the standards in conducting research. The interview guide was handed to expert for validation. Again, the researcher collected enough related studies to strengthen the results and claims of this study.

3.7.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is characterized as ensuring that conclusions are drawn on the basis of data and subsequent review instead of being conceived without validation by the researcher (Jensen, 2008). It is about presenting proof that the interpretations of participant constructions by the researcher are rooted in the constructions of the participants. Data review and the outcomes and findings can also be verified as representative of and based on the experiences of the participants. Maree and Westhuizen (2007) recommends that for transferability to occur in qualitative studies, there should be a careful recording and transcription of interview data, and other instruments, and there should be enough evidence from the interview data which may be in a form of excerpts to substantiate the views of the participants and the researcher adhered to that. Where possible the researcher brings in excerpts of the interview to support her claim this prevented the researcher from making vague statement.

3.8   Data Analysis Procedures

Data were analysed in themes. Data were transcribed by focusing on the key elements in the narrative that highlighted the aims of this research. Personal and identifying details were left out which ensured the anonymity of the respondents. Additionally, only those direct quotes deemed necessary were included in the transcription. This helped to create data that was as close to the recorded voices and field notes take as possible.

Data were coded using inductive and deductive codes. Thus, data were grouped according to themes and analysed in terms of these themes. According to Gilbert (2016), deductive codes originate from the researcher, for example concepts or theory in the research literature. Collins et al. (2010) described qualitative coding as a process of conceptualising the data. The researcher aims to organise the data so that he or she has a sense of the scope and coverage of the data set. Qualitative coding also facilitates understanding, because it suggests ways in which the data can be organised (Kusi, 2012; Collins et al., 2010). Inductive codes emanate directly from the data and are developed by noting the issues raised by respondents (Gilbert, 2016). Inductive codes were extremely valuable as they reflected issues that were important to respondents, which may be different from those anticipated by the researcher.

The researcher followed the following processes in analysing the data in themes as indicated by Lincoln and Guba (1985):

1. Data familiarisation: At this stage, the researcher organised data from field notes and audio recordings of interviews from respondents into transcripts and reread the transcripts several times.

2. Code formation: After the transcription of the data, the researcher organised the data by coming up with codes which imaged the transcripts.

3. Identifying Theme: The researcher then transformed the codes into specific themes or categories.

4. Refining the themes: At this stage, researcher sorted out the themes. Also, the researcher checked for repetitions, similarities and differences that emerged so as to refine the data.

5. Defining and naming themes: During this stage, the researcher finally refined and defined the themes for the analysis.

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6. Reporting: At this final stage, the researcher went through the defined and named themes which were used in the findings and discussion section under Chapter Four of the study.

3.9   Ethical Issues

Ethical issues considered in this study included: a) access to respondents; b) informed and voluntary consent; c) confidentiality of information shared; d) anonymity of research respondents; e) No harm to respondents and reciprocity.

The researcher applied for an introductory letter from the Head, Department of Counselling Psychology, University, of Education, Winneba after the research supervisor had approved the interview guide. The researcher was then given this letter which gave her easy access to gate keepers and adolescents. With the help of this letter, the gate keepers and respondents believed that the study was for academic purposes.

In this study, the respondents were fully informed of what would be asked of them, how the data would be used and what (if any) consequences there could be. Furthermore, respondents were also made to understand their rights to access their information and the right to withdraw at any point. In this study, respondents were assured that the information shared would be between the researcher and respondents only. However, if there would be a third party, it would be the researcher's supervisor. This would help the supervisor to guide the researcher to write the research report well.

In discussing the themes derived from the data collection in this study, participant's identities were hidden by using pseudo names. For instance, adolescents were referred to using letters (codes) such as AP: 1 to AP: 7. For this reason, no names or titles (statuses) were attached to the responses given by respondents in the report. The pseudo names helped to promote anonymity and confidentiality of respondents.

With this ethical issue, the researcher provided respondents with an outline of the risks and benefits involved to the respondents in the study. An example of the benefit the researcher gave to adolescents was that they were guided on how to cope with their situation aside those coping mechanisms they already know. Likewise, stakeholders were notified on areas they could provide support services in with regards to the experiences of adolescents with regards to parental divorce. This guidance was given to respondents after the interview sessions. Hence, helped them improve their knowledge with regards to the study under investigation.

In line with the risk, adolescents were made aware by the researcher that in sharing their stories they were likely to remember some difficult situations they went through and this could disturb them psychologically. However, they were assured that in times like this, the researcher was there to provide either guidance or counselling depending on the situation they find themselves in. For example, few of the adolescents wept while sharing their stories. The researcher at that moment paused the interview, gave them some time to cry out what were in their hearts. While they went through this state, the researcher tapped their shoulders and alerted them the researcher understands what they were going through at that moment.

This technique (empathy) helped them to come to their "normal state" for the interviews to continue. Also, in ensuring the ethic of reciprocity, the researcher considered actively ways through which respondents could be compensated for their time and effort. For this reason, information about risks and benefits were provided to respondents while seeking their consent.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0   Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the data. Data was obtained from the respondents to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the emotional experiences of adolescents of divorced parents in Assin Fosu Township?

2. How does divorce affect the social lives of adolescents in Assin Fosu Township?

3. How does divorce affect the academic lives of adolescents in Assin Fosu Township?

4. How do adolescents cope with their emotional experiences as a result of parental divorce in Assin Fosu Township?

 The analysis is in five sections. Section one thus 4.1 present the demographics of the participants. Section two, three, four and five, thus 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 presents the analysis on research question 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively.

4.1   Demographic Characteristics of Participants

This section provides a brief but concise background of the participants who were interviewed. Hence, the age groups, gender, level of education and guardianship status are captured in this section.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

S/N	Item		Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Gender			
		Male	2	29
		Female	5	71
	Age			
		12 - 14	4	57
		15 - 17	3	43
	Level of education			
		Basic level	4	57
		Secondary level	3	43
	Guardianship status			
		Living with mother only	4	57
		Living with father only	1	14
		Living with relative	2	29
		Other	0	0

Source: Fieldwork data, 2022

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of participants. It can be seen from the Table that 29 and 71 percent of the adolescents interviewed are males and females respectively. Also, most the participants 4(57%) were in their early adolescent stages whilst 3(43%) were between the ages 14 - 17. Furthermore, all respondents were enrolled in high school hence have an appreciable level of knowledge of what is happening around them. Finally, it can be observed from the table that majority 4(57%) of the participants lived with their mothers with a considerable number 3(43%) living with their fathers and relatives.

4.2.   Research Question 1: What are the emotional experiences of adolescents of divorced parents in Assin Fosu Township?

The objective of this question was to explore the psychological experiences of adolescents of divorced parents in Assin Fosu Township. Themes obtained from the interviews included: emotionally trauma, abandoned, anger and deserted as well as the thought of committing suicide. The following comments were advanced to support this claim that some of that feel emotionally trauma:

> *"As for the divorce of my parents, I don't want to talk about it at all. This is because sometimes I hate my parents for abandoning us ... In fact, it's hurting ... because it's sad. Because we don't get to see each other"* [AP: 5].

Again, participant 4 said:

> *"I am feeling physically and emotionally down which include a whole display of emotions, ranging from alarm to sadness"* [AP: 4].

More so, adolescent participant 7 said:

> *"I break down in tears for my mother's pain, and for my own. I understand fully that my mother needs us now more than ever, but no one understands how much they are asking for when they ask me to let her come back into my life"* [AP: 7].

The following comments were also made by some respondents suggesting that they felt abandoned.

> *"It's like a whole lot of mixed emotions ... its like although she was staying here ... now I feel like she is just abandoning me"*. She further explains: *"I feel like she doesn't care much"* which ultimately leads to her saying *"I don't think that I ...can rely on her for anything"* [AP: 3].

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Again, one participant said:

> "...there are stages where things are very hard because my mum left us when I was very small and my father too is not even here to guide him" [AP: 1].

Further, participant 1 emphatically said:

> "My mum is worried because it has been so long since I have fallen sick. The worst part is that my father retired this year, and we don't have access to medical aid anymore" [AP: 2].

Besides, the following comments were made by some participants attesting to the fact that they were angry.

> "...she blames everyone except herself for all the crap things in her life, she keeps forgetting the fact that she's the only one to blame for her mistakes, the biggest mistake she made nine years ago, when she left my dad, 3 sisters and I to fend for ourselves, God–I hate her" [AP: 6].

In furtherance, participant 6 said:

> "I'm enraged because of her stupid boss, I'm angry at Peter (pseudonym) for beating up mum the last time and I'm angry because she's leaving me again" [AP: 4].

This was not different from what participant 4 said:

> "What I don't understand is after someone can hit somebody else so badly, that they are willing to go through stuff like that just to be with each other. "I mean seeing your mum being beaten up… things like that really hurt me – it really affected me terribly" [AP: 4].

It was again deduced from some of the comments made by some participants that they sometimes feel deserted.

For example, participant 3 said:

"I wanted to go and see mummy and them today but daddy said that I couldn't go. He is so … frustrating. How does he just expect me to sit at home and not visit?" [AP: 3].

More so, participant 1 said:

"Dad refuses to take us to see mom. I'm absolutely infuriated! How dare he? I've spent almost the entire evening crying because I know how much I'll miss her, and I keep wondering if she will be okay" [AP: 1].

Another participant said:

"I feel like a burden to him because things are so tough these days and he has to provide for me single-handedly and without a job. Mom makes no financial contributions at all" [AP: 5].

Additionally, some of the comments made by some participants suggested that they sometime had thoughts of suicide. For example, one of these participants said:

"Things are not working well for me at home. We got into another argument. I'm not even sure about what. I'm tired and I feel like taking away my life all these nonsenses to end" [AP: 4].

Further, participant 7 said:

"The pain is great. I feel like I'm just a burden. I feel like no one cares. I feel unwanted and worthless. I cried all morning – even at school. What scares me is the fact that I can't handle this stuff anymore. I feel emotionally exhausted and wish to take away my life one day. I'm trying hard to resist" [AP: 7].

Further, participant 1 said:

"Today when I went home my aunt started arguing with me for no reason and we had a huge fight. I felt like killing myself. I even wrote a suicide note and addressed it to all the important people in my life" [AP: 1].

These comments suggest that some of the participants expressed immense feelings of sadness and distress regarding the parental divorce. Others expressed that pains that their mothers go through in the abusive relationship that they engaged in after the divorce. Some participants also expressed feelings of distress over the situation their mothers had put them in. From the comments given it infers that some of the participants experienced feelings of abandonment which stem from parents.

Again, some of the participants expressed feelings of anger over the situations they found themselves. Besides, some of these participants expressed immense feelings of anger towards both parents about their divorce, and also felt extremely helpless about the situation. These experiences by the participants led them to experience these feelings of suicide as indicated in the comments made by some of the participants. It was concluded that feelings of sadness, distress, abandonment, anger, helplessness and thoughts of suicide were the cognitive experiences of adolescents of divorced parents in Assin Fosu Township.

The findings concur that of Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002) who discovered that feelings of anger caused by the interacting systems as indicated by Bronfenbrenner's ecological model affected the adolescents from divorce homes to a large extent. Moreover, Oesterreich (1996) stated that research show that children are greatly affected by divorce throughout their youth and one way of indicating this is by displaying feelings of anger. Also, these findings support that of Kennedy and King (1994) who found that depression is a debilitating condition that many who go through life have to combat.

The finding of the study is further supported by Ahrons (2007) who stated that "divorce presents certain risks, is an emotionally stressful and complex transition for families and affects children drastically" (p. 55). This is further in keeping with Rodriguez and

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Arnold (1998) who found that girls who experience parental divorce "manifest distress in ways that are more difficult to observe, such as becoming more anxious or depressed" (p. 6).

More so, Mc Connell and Sim (1999) also found that the void left by the absent parent was profound and affected the adolescents adversely. McConnell and Sim (1999) further found that the needs of the children from divorce homes include that of a stable, warm, intimate family relationship and the freedom to love both parents. Rodriguez and Arnold (1998) argued that parents who divorce are more likely to have experienced difficulties such as emotional abuse, alcoholism, drug abuse and physical.

4.3   Research Question 2: How does divorce affect the social lives of adolescents experiencing parental divorce in Assin Fosu Township?

The objective of this question was to explore how divorce affects the social lives of adolescents experiencing parental divorce in Assin Fosu Township. Themes identified within the data analysis included: leaving antisocial life and exhibiting isolated behaviour. Verifying to this pronouncement, subsequent responses were given by some participants:

> *"Of late, I have not been going for most of the social gathering that happen in and around the Assin Fosu Township. This is because I don't want what happened to me to happen again. This is because the last time I went to such gatherings, I realised my peers who were not from divorced homes were discussing about me" [AP: 5].*

Also, participant 3 said:

> *"I have not officially told my friends why in recent times I don't join them when they are going out. But the truth is that I don't want to experience what I experienced some few months ago. I mean the where my friends were talking about me" [AP: 3].*

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Comments from participant 2 affirmed what had already been established that:

> *"I have made up my mind that I will not entertain any social gatherings again. This is because anytime I join such gatherings, I realised that my peers will meet at one corner and be talking about me. Anytime I want to join them at where they are seated, then, they change the subject of discussion"* [AP: 2].

This supports what participant 6 that said:

> *"For about three months now, I have not gone to any social gatherings like jams, floats and others. This is to help avoid any form of embarrassment from my peers who think that I am from a poor home (divorced parents)"* [AP: 6].

It can be realised from these comments that some of the participants had planned not to go for social gatherings in order to encounter embarrassment from their peers who were not from divorced homes. This infers that divorce had made these participants to exempt themselves from social gatherings.

It was further identified from some of the comments given by some participants that they had been avoiding some of some friends. The subsequent remarks were made to endorse this assertion. For instance, participant 1 said:

> *"I have decided not to related with some friends who will invite me to social gatherings. Though it had not been easy for me taking this decision, but I have to in order to save myself from shame and embarrassment I had earlier received from some friends"* [AP: 1].

This confirms the assertion of participant 2 who said:

> *"I have not been picking calls from some of my friends who always want to take me to clubs and other social gatherings. I have done this for about two weeks now, though it is not easy taking this step"* [AP: 2].

More so, participant 4 said:

"I had redrawn myself from some of my friends. This is because I don't want to involve myself again in any social gatherings that can result in shame. Thus, not accepting me in public" [AP: 4].

Participant 5 said something similar when she said:

"To save myself from other humiliation, I have decided to cut some of my friends off from my life. I have done this for about one" [AP: 5].

From these comments it was realised that as a result of the divorce experienced by these participants had made them to take a decision to avoid some of their friends whom they think when they associate themselves with, they can end up at social gatherings which can lead to their embarrassment. The comments in general infer that friends of adolescents from divorced parents sometimes do not accept them as who they were. The comments further suggest that these colleagues of adolescents from divorced homes proclaim negative comments about them. Such negative comments can adversely affect the emotional well-being of adolescents from divorced parents. In order to curtail this embarrassment, these adolescents from divorced homes had planned not to attend social gatherings. Similarly, they had decided not be too close to friends they think can draw them to such social gatherings. It was concluded that divorce negatively affected the social lives in Assin Fosu Township.

The finding confirms that of Sudarkasa (2004) who reported that adolescents sometimes detached themselves from the peers because of the divorce home they come from. Sudarkasa (2004) further found that adolescents from divorced home sometimes isolate themselves from their friends. Naylor (2000) also found that parental divorce can lead to isolation among adolescents from parental divorced homes. Again, Stolba and Amato (1993) found that sometimes adolescents from divorced homes do not attend

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programmes because of the way their peers look down upon them. Further, Heath and MacKinnon (1988) found that majority of the adolescents from divorced parents argued that they did not associate well with their peers who were not from divorced homes.

4.4 How does divorce affect the academic lives of adolescents in Assin Fosu Township?

Research question three was designed to elicit for responses on the effect of divorce on the academic experience of adolescent of divorced parents. Upon analysis of the data, four major themes emerged from the findings. It was identified that, the divorced of the parents affected the adolescent in four major ways thus, poor financial supports, poor attendance, lack of motivation and lack of support/supervision.

4.4.1 Poor financial supports

The first major theme that emerged from the data indicated that, due to the divorced of their parents they don't get the financial support they need from their parents when it comes to their education. The following are some of the comments the interviewees gave:

> 'Madam, there are times that you need money to buy book or textbook. When that time comes and you ask I ask my mother she will tell me to go and asked my father. When I asked my father too sometimes he will tell me that, he is not the only person who gave birth to me.'[AP: 1].
>
> 'The last time I needed money to buy mathematical sets and some things. When I went to my mother, she told me she is not having money and that I should go and collect it from my father. When I informed my father, he told me point blank that he will not take care of me, for my mother to benefit in the long run.'[AP 2]

Another interviewee also had this to say:

> 'As for me, my mother don't care about me at all. Whenever I need money in school, if not my father my mother will not give me some.' [AP:4].

The comments from the interviewees indicate that, the interviewees do not get the financial assistance they need from their parents. This prompted the researcher to probe further whether that was the situation prior to the divorce. The comments the interviewees gave indicated that, the situation was not the same when their parents were staying as married couples. the following are some of the comments the interviewees gave:

One students had this to say:

> *'No, no, no, not at all! I can remember very well that, when we were staying together, my parents were doing their very best to provide for me. I was getting everything I needed in school. Even, the money they used to give me to go to school has reduced.' [AP 3].*

Another student also had this to say:

> *'Madam, what I can say is that, we were not having money but I think my parents were always trying to provide for us. There was no day that I went to school without eating. But for now, sometimes I go to school without food.'[AP 4].*

These comments from the interviewees attest to the fact that, due to divorce, the adolescent do not get the necessary financial support they need to support their academic work.

4.4.2 Poor attendance

Another interesting revelation that emerged from the transcribed data was that, the adolescent of divorced parents were experiencing poor attendance due to the support they don't get from their parents. The following are some of the comments the interviewees gave:

> *'Madam you see because sometimes I found it difficult to get money to buy some of the things I need in school, I mostly don't feel like going to school. If you go sometimes you feel too ashamed because certain common items that all my school mates are having, me I don't have some.' [AP 2].*

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Another student also said:

'Madam, am shy but I have to say it. There are times I have to sleep with men to get money to buy some items I need in school. because of that, sometimes I will go and sleep with my boyfried and will not come home early. When that happens I don't go to school.' [AP 4]

Again one student also has this to say:

'I think the now I don't go to school like when my mother and father were married. The reason is that, sometimes I have to work to get money so that I can get money to go to school. due to that, every market days I don't go to school. Sometimes too, if I and my friends we get contract, we stop school to do the work because if you don't do that that owner of the work will give it to different person or group.' [AP 5]

The comments from this section indicate that the students' rate of attendance has been affected as a result of the divorce between their mother and father.

4.4.3 Lack of motivation

One sad theme that emerged from the data was lack of motivation. Some of the comments the interviewees gave indicate that, they lack motivation to even continue their education. Some of the comments indicate that even when it comes to parent teacher association meetings they hardly get someone to represent them and that alone demotivates them in their academic work. the following are some of the comments the interviewees gave:

Interviewee 1 has this to say:

'Madam as for me, I sometimes feel sad. Look, there have been many times that when they call for PTA meeting, I don't even get any of my parents to come. If I informed my mother she will tell me to go and tell my father. If I tell my father, he too will ask why my mother says she cannot go. When these happened I loose hope. Sometimes I asked myself whether they even care at all about me?.' [AP 3]

Another person has this to say:

'As for me is like I am going to the school for myself. When they are doing anything in the school, I don't get anyone to come and represent me. My teachers at times

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thinks I am a stubor child that is why my parents don't also care but that is not the issue.' [AP4]

Another student also comments:

> *'Hmmm! It difficult oo! The way I am suffering in the school I cant even explain. There is nothing the push you to continue the school. it is like I don't have anybody. Everything is all by myself. [AP 7].*

The comments the interviewees gave indicate that they lack the right motivation from their parents in their education. This is because, even in terms of PTA meetings they have no body to represent them. considering the fact that, they hardly get someone to assist them in their financial needs coupled with the fact that they hardly get someone to represent them at school meetings is a demotivating factor to their academic life. They feel lonely, dejected and isolated during such meetings. The reason is that, when parents come to the school at least that alone communicate to the others that the student also has support.

4.4.4   Lack of supervision/assistance

The last them that emerged from this section was lack of supervision or assistance. From the comments it was deduced that, the students lack someone to supervise or assist them in their studies and they attribute it to the fact that they don't stay with both parents. The following are some of the comments the interviewees gave:

> *One of the problems I started facing when my father and mother stopped their marriage was the one to assist me do my homework. Before my father and mother stopped, my father will always asked me whether I brought homework. He will make sure that I have done it. Where I have problem, he will help me. I will say my father was the one who remind me as far as my assignment is concerned. But now, I don't get that assistance anymore.' [AP 2]*

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Another interviewee also contends:

> *'I used to do my assignment with my father. He was always concern about that. however, when they broke their marriage I don't get that help again. Anytime I tell my mother to help me, she will either say she is too busy of I she is tired.'* *[AP 4]*

Another interviewee also gave the following comments:

> *'As for me I like to play and watch TV a lot. What my father used to do is that, he will give me portion of my notes to read and explain to him before he will allow me to watch TV. That was what he was doing to make me learn. But ever since they stopped their marriage, I don't learn like that again. My mother don't care if I will learn or not.'* *[AP 6]*

The comments from the interviewees indicate that the kind of support they used to received from their parents when they were married couples has changed. Their parents as a result of the divorce do not care about their studies again.

The general findings from research question three indicate that, the students do not receive the needed financial support from their parents due to the divorce. This findings concur with that of Akpan (2007) who found that, it is always beneficial for parents to be staying together because the moment there is separation the child suffers in terms of finance. Akpan opines that, many a times fathers failed to respond to their financial obligation they have towards their wards with the view that once they have divorce, they will not give the money for the mother to benefit from it. Again it was established that, due to the divorce, the adolescent attendance to school were negatively affected. This findings also confirmed that of Berns (2007) and Cohen and Finzi-Dottan (2005) when the schlars found out in their separate studies that, childs attendance to school have always been affected anytime there is divorce between couples. Berns (2007) argues that, whenever there is divorced, the children are sometimes forced to take care of themselves and that result in them engaging in menial work. As a result of the menial work, they end up escaping school. It was also established that, due to divorce, the

adolescent child lack support and motivation in their school and that affected them. This findings also align with that of Furstenberg (2011) when the scholar contends that, when parents are together they easily make time for their wards but once there is separation, each expert the other to sacrifice for the child's well-being and it always end up in a catastrophic manner. The child at the long effect suffers.

4.5   Research Question 4: How do adolescents in Assin Fosu Township cope with their emotional experiences as a result of parental divorce?

The objective of this question was to find out how adolescents in Assin Fosu Township cope with their cognitive experiences as a result of parental divorce. Themes obtained from the interview data included: Advice from friends and teachers, Resorting to drugs and other had substance, engaging in premarital sexual relationships and practicing of antisocial behaviours. The succeeding explanations were put forth by some of the participants to back this assertion:

> *"Some of my friends have been encouraging me because of the situation I find myself. Though some of them do not do so, the few that do so help them me to overcome some of the challenges I face [AP: 7].*

Another adolescent said:

> *"I at time become relieved by the kind of words some of my friends tell me. This has been my strong way of sustaining what I am going through in life [AP: 1].*

Also, participant number 5 said:

> *"There was a day I decided to stop schooling because of the situation I find myself. But, after I informed my best friend, she told me not to stop schooling but believe God that one day I will get a helper. This message from my friend made me to change that negative thought of mine" [AP: 5].*

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Again, AP: 3 said:

> "Sometimes some of my friends encourage me not to give up in life and this has brought me this far" [AP: 3].

Another participant said:

> "In fact, not all my friends are bad. There are good ones among them. There are some friends who are always there for me and these friends console me whenever I am in difficult times" [AP: 2].

As well, participant 4 said:

> "I have some two friends who are always by me whether rain or shine. Because of them I am able to live till now" [AP: 4].

From these comments it could be realised that friends are able to support these victims of parental divorce through their words of encouragement. Based on that, these adolescents are able to cope with the current situations. Other comments from some of the adolescents infer that they resort to smoking as a way to cope with their psychological experiences.

> "And we had an argument in the morning–so I started smoking that day. I started smoking cigarettes about 3 years ago…" [AP: 7].

Another participant said:

> "I went to the side of the shop and smoked…. After entering school, I went again and smoked in the toilet. Thus, I smoked before I went to school. I can say boldly that my friends and I bunked class to go and smoke" [AP: 2].

Again, participant 3 said:

> "My father started smoking when he was 13 years old, so did I. I smoke about 3 cigarettes a day" [AP: 4].

Furthermore, participant 1 said:

> "Smoking cigarettes is ultimately an inadequate coping method for me, which led me to smoking marijuana. Thus, I felt that it was not giving me enough… nothing was happening, so I resorted to the smoking of marijuana" [AP: 3].

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Consequently, the researcher could deduce from these comments that adolescents from divorced families sometimes indulged in the smoking as a way to deal with the situation they find themselves (parental divorce).

Other comments from some of the participants denote that some of the participants in the research study also indulged in alcohol usage.

> "I went out for supper……. And I was a bit tipsy because I had four Martinis. ...we went to the car park and drank some Vodka. John (pseudonym) is mad at me because he found out that I drank"

Another participant said:

> "My mother went out with her friends tonight. I drank a bit and then went home. I met up with some of my colleagues from the win shopping centre. They were drinking so I started drinking with them too"

On relating a night out with her friends, participant 4 said:

> "It was so much of fun, even though I was the only girl, I fitted in and everything was so relaxed and it was that just the alcohol speaking. In fact, we had some time to kill so we went to the sports bar and had a few drinks"

He tells of yet another incident pertaining to casual drinking by saying:

> "Everything was closed by then (it was about 11pm) so we ended up at a bar in …. We had a few drinks"

Moreover, participant 6 goes on to describe the party that she had for her 17th birthday, which began at the local shopping mall by saying:

> "We all had a few drinks and then we were off to the beach. … where we indulged in some weed smoking… after that we went to … for some more alcohol, drugs and partying"

It is evident from these comments from some participants that it is common for adolescents from divorced and separated families to indulge in drinking alcohol.

Some of the participants also reported that they engaged in premarital relationships as a way of dealing with the issue of parental divorce. The following comments were declared to affirm this declaration:

> *"One of my male friends asked me out today. He is kinda cute, so I said I'll think about it. I have three boyfriends already, so one more won't hurt"* [AP: 2].

Also, participant 7 said:

> *"I've noticed that I am unable to emotionally connect with any boy on a romantic level…"* But *I kissed Kwame's (pseudonym) best friend! I hate myself for that"* [AP: 7].

More so, participant 1 said:

> *"I don't actually know what is wrong with me. But, one day I ended up kissing two guys in a drinking bar there–both ex-students of my current school"* [AP: 1].

Besides, participant 5 said:

> *"I end up sitting next to Gloria (pseudonym). We watched 5 minutes of the movie and then we went to find a cool spot to make out. One thing led to another … we ended up having sex that particular night"* [AP: 5].

Participant 4 emphatically said:

> *"We smoked all the weed I bought on Friday, then we took a drive to the beach. Mark (pseudonym). and I ended up doing the deed (we used condoms). We went back to his place and ended up doing it again. I didn't particularly enjoy myself, he's rather selfish in bed–but I pretended I did anyway. I'm not sure I even enjoy his company"* [AP: 4].

It could be realised from these comments that due to these adolescents being exposed to unstable relationships between their parents, the participants themselves experienced immense difficulties in establishing meaningful relationships in their lives.

It was also noted that some of the participants displayed a tendency to indulge in delinquent behaviours during school hours. For example, participant 6 said:

> *"I got goofed with my friends and we got kicked out of class. We bunked class to go and smoke. We were smoking on the grounds and the coach was there playing volleyball"* [AP: 6].

Another participant said:

> *"I was caught smoking in the toilet and everything has been so chaotic ever since. I went into the girl's toilet to smoke and 4 other girls followed me. There were about 6 girls in the toilet. We smoked. I was standing on the toilet pan, looking out the small hole on the top of the wall… we were then taken to the office"* [AP: 5].

Again, participant 1 said:

> *"She asked me if the toilets were clean or if we couldn't see anything because of the smoke. I told her that they should put locks on the doors so that the cleaning staff could not get in while we were smoking…."* [AP: 1].

Further, participant 2 said:

> *"… like when things get a bit too much to handle… I just go and relax myself – so I go and smoke and drink and do stuff"* [AP: 2].

In general, it could be realised from these comments that adolescents of divorced parents had strategies they used to cope with their cognitive experiences. The results further suggested that while very few of these adolescents adopted positive coping mechanisms, majority of them used negative mechanisms in dealing with their cognitive experiences. Meanwhile, these adolescents are the future leaders of this nation. For that matter, if not measures are put in place to assist these adolescents to deal effectively with their cognitive experiences, it may in the long run affect their future. For example, those who may indulge in deviate behaviours such as stealing may end up hitting the road as armed robbers. Similarly, girls who may engage in premarital sexual intercourse can become pregnant and may drop out of school. In this sense, they may become a burden to their society and the nation at large. It was then concluded based on these results that adolescents of parental divorce received advice from friends and teachers, smoked, used drug, drink alcohol, engaged in premarital relationships and practiced delinquent behaviours as coping strategies adopted for their psychological experiences.

This finding is supported by Stearns (2005) who found that adolescents with divorced parents were more likely to smoke marijuana compared to those adolescents whose parents were still married. Similarly, according to Stearns (2005), family support and structure have a huge impact on the behaviour of adolescents. Stearns (2005) found that some participants indicated that they turned to smoking cigarettes as a coping strategy for the problems that they experienced. This finding is further supported by Rodriguez and Arnold (1998) who claim that adolescents who experienced parental divorce were more likely to be involved in substance use and to report problematic substance use than children who experienced no divorce.

Furthermore, these findings correspond with Amato (1993) who stated that a longitudinal study conducted on adults who experienced their parents" divorces in their youth, showed poor psychological adjustment and greater marital instability with regards to sexual intimacy compared to those from continuously intact families of origin. Also, it is stated in Rodriguez and Arnold (1998) that children of divorce exhibit sign of early disengagement from school, show increasing incidences of truancy and more negative attitudes towards school and much of this is attributed to less monitoring of school work and social activities by both parents. Stearns (2005) further places emphasis on the fact that having a single parent around results in less attention being paid to the child due to the many responsibilities that the single parent may have. In keeping with the above statements, it was also noted that some of the participants displayed a tendency to indulge in delinquent behaviour during school hours.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0   Introduction

The chapter presents the summary, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for future studies.

5.1   Summary

The study sought to explore emotional experiences of adolescents of divorced parents in Assin Fosu Township, Ghana in order to further understand the phenomenon. The objectives of the study were to:

1. explore the emotional experiences of adolescents of divorced parents in Assin Fosu Township.

2. explore the effects of divorce on the social lives of adolescents in Assin Fosu Township.

3. investigate the effect of divorce on the academic lives of adolescents in Assin Fosu Township.

4. identify ways adolescents cope with their emotional experiences as a result of parental divorce in Assin Fosu Township.

The study adopted naturalistic paradigm. Also, phenomenological design within the qualitative research approach was used for the study. A sample of 7 participants was used for the study. These participants were selected using maximum variation type of purposive sampling technique. Semi-structured interview guide was used to collect data for the study. The instrument was taken through credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability so as to ensure its trustworthiness. Data were analysed

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in themes. The study found that feelings of sadness, distress, abandonment, anger, helplessness and thoughts of suicide were the key cognitive experiences of adolescents of divorced parents in Assin Fosu Township. The study also established that, due to divorce, the adolescent child faces some challenges in their academic life. This include lack of financial support from parents, poor school attendance, lack of supervision and support in terms of homework and other assignments. Furthermore, adolescents of parental divorce received advice from friends and teachers, smoked, used drugs, drunk alcohol, engaged in premarital sexual relationships and practiced antisocial behaviours as coping strategies adopted for their cognitive experiences. Moreover, divorce adversely affected the social lives of adolescents in Assin Fosu Township.

5.2   Conclusions

The study therefore concluded based on these findings that parental divorce influences the thinking processes of adolescents in Assin Fosu Township. Thus, as a result of divorce experienced by some adolescents in Assin Fosu Township, they conceived negative thought from their day-to-day activities.

Also, while very few the adolescents from parental divorce homes adopted positive coping strategies, majority of them used negative coping strategies in dealing with their emotional experiences. This suggests that not all the adolescents from divorced parents employed positive coping mechanisms to deal with their emotional experiences. The reason can be that perhaps they believed that the negative coping mechanisms can work best for them instead of the positive ones.

Also, it was concluded that, divorce has negative implication on the academic life of the adolescent. This is because the findings of the study established that due to the

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divorce of their parents they no more get the needed financial assistance from their parents. Each of the parent is pushing the responsibility on one another.

Moreover, adolescents from parental divorce homes isolated themselves from some of the peers. This infers that these adolescents did not like the way and manner some of their peers treated them. Therefore, for them to deal with the bad treatment from their peers, they turned to isolate themselves from such peers. Besides, some of the adolescents of divorced parents seized attending social gatherings. These adolescents conceptualised that by doing so, they would be freed from unfair treatment by some of their colleagues.

5.3   Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

1. Teachers who are in direct touch with school-age adolescents of divorced parents in Assin Fosu Township should monitor critically how these adolescents think and respond to issues during teaching and learning. This is because these adolescents are in a unique situation whereby these stakeholders of education can observe any changes in their thinking processes and that offer some kind of support. This support can include referring them to the school counsellor, giving words of motivation, providing them with extra tuition, just to mention but a few.

2. The school head together with the school counsellor in Assin Fosu Township should help adolescents of divorced parents by providing them with one-on-one counselling. Thus, these educational stakeholders should let these adolescents understand that they are available for anyone who needs to talk to them and that

they can make time to listen to their challenges. This would help them focus more on positive coping strategies instead of the negative ones. Likewise, during parent association meetings, the school counsellor should reorient parents on how to build on adolescent-parent relationship. For example, the school counsellor can guide parents on how to provide attachment, and care to such adolescents. Based on this attachment, these adolescents would be able to share some of the challenges they are going through for them to be helped by their parents.

3. It is recommended that, there should be a stringent law that will prescribe the duties of father and mother whenever there is divorce. When this is done, the child may get the needed logistics as well as the love he or she needs in school. Teacher and other educators should also be spoken to on how to handle matters when it comes to handling children of divorced parents.

4. The school counsellor, teachers and heads should educate the entire students on how to fairly treat adolescents from divorced parents. For example, students can be taught how to build good student-student relationship no matter the socio-economic background of the students. This can make students embrace adolescents from divorced parents instead of looking down upon them. Similarly, groups and associations or organisations such as Churches, Mosque and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) should be encouraged by the school counsellor and teachers to provide social support services to adolescents from parental divorce homes. This could take the form of provision of food, clothing and shelter, and learning materials.

5.4   Suggestions for Future Studies

The following areas can be considered by future researchers:

1. Psychosocial experiences of children of divorced parents in Assin Fosu Township.

2. Adolescent-parent relationship after divorce in Assin Fosu Township: A phenomenological study.

3. Social support systems available to adolescents of divorced parents in Assin Fosu Township: Implications for counselling.

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APPENDIX I

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES

DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ADOLESCENTS

Dear Sir/Madam,

This interview guide is meant to collect data for a study being conducted by Nana Abena Nkansah, a student from the above-mentioned University in connection with a Master of Philosophy (Counselling Psychology) thesis titled **"Emotional experiences of adolescents of divorced parents in Assin Fosu Township, Ghana".**

The information you would provide would help the researcher, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), School Management and other stakeholder to understand the extent to which parental divorce affects adolescents in order to provide data for improving the situation through counselling.

The interview guide has three sections: Sections A, B and C. You are assured that information you would provide would be given the utmost confidentiality in addition to non-disclosure of your identify should the data be published. Taking part in this study is however voluntary.

Than you.

Section A

Research Question 1: What are the emotional experiences of adolescents of divorced parents in Assin Fosu Township?

1. Describe the nature of the problems you experience and its intensity?

2. What challenges are you faced with (both past and present)?

3. How do these challenges affect you the way you think?

Research Question 2: How do adolescents of divorced parents cope with their emotional experiences from parental divorce?

4. How do you manage your situation?

5. What coping strategies do/did you use?

6. What do you think had sustained you till now?

Research Question 3: How does divorce affects the social lives of adolescents experiencing parental divorce in Assin Fosu Township?

7. How do your peers perceive you?

8. What treatment do your colleagues give you when you meet in public?

9. Describe the none verbal reactions you receive from your peers and other people around you?

10. Do you have any other comments based on what we have discussed so far?