

## **Blended/Step-Families and Challenges With Regard To Children**

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### **Abstract**

*Broken families are the one where the parents have segregated or divorced. The risk that children in blended or step families will be left behind, both scholastically, and emotionally, is much greater than it is for children of intact families. Parental remarriage has a detrimental effect on children. According to many researchers step children would likely be exhibit mental, emotional and interpersonal problems. The researcher practiced snowball sampling in order to get through to their respondents. 170 children under the age group 10 to 18 year and selected through simple probability sampling with use of purposive and snowball sampling technique from four of the secondary schools with the help of Questionnaire and Interview Schedule. The study found the adverse effects of step/blended families on youngest and middle age children that they in early age take more negative effects on them and it ultimately effects on their schooling, grooming and socialization as well. The study recommended that parents should pay attention and provide emotional affection to their kids because whatever time they had to spend enjoying has been passed. It's the children's who have to grow up and suffer.*

**Key Words:** Relationships, Conflict, Step Children, Domestic Arguments, Stereotype, Remarriage, Blended Families, Single Parent

### **Introduction**

The single most widely studied issue involving stepfamilies has been the effect on stepchildren of living in a stepparent household (Coleman et al., 2000). Some researchers frame this issue as the effects of parental

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remarriage on children or the effects of having a stepparent on stepchildren. Sometimes researchers examine how specific phenomena in the step-household, such as parental conflict, are related to children's outcomes. The step family or blended family is becoming as common today as biological mother and father. Blended families are complicated and different ways of becoming blended families and living arrangements. Blended families are normally formed through marriages, often after divorce. The death of one parent can also lead to remarriage. (Donald & Cathleen: 2002)

Marriage is a practice of binding a couple together for the purpose of reproduction, attention (physical/emotional), and socialization of children. Marriage is a societal and authorized agreement between a man and woman and the state in which they dwell and adjust with their financial and sexual affiliation. (David & Caroline: 2005)

In broken family individual is derived from the special experience and security called family. They move on in their lives alone without the understanding of what familial security and bond is. It cannot be denied that the consequences of divorce are often disturbing to the children.

A break up home can spoil and confound a person's whole life. It's so natural from infancy to teen years because nobody desires to lose those caring sentiment which a family give to his member. (David: 2000) Human being experiences a broad range of emotions to try to pass through. Largely stability has to be contributed by the parents as possible and introduce other set examples/ role models for character building of their child. Parents have to contribute as much stability as feasible and include other responsible role models to provide assistance for their child. It is foremost that the human realize that he is still secure, loved and cherished. Only hard times does not affect the marital relationship but sometimes good times and unexpected opportunities which are available to some people but not others also effects the relationship. (David: 2002) As a matter of fact the main concern over divorce in our culture is a concern over the children. In our small family system the child of divorced parents has nowhere to turn except to one parent or the other. In contrast to a culture with a joint family system, our culture cannot provide a stable domestic milieu that continues after divorce. Divorce is therefore more serious for the child among us that among most cultures. (John: 1944)

Mental health professionals perceive divorce as a psychological/mental illness. Sigmund Freud says that when conflict is inherent in the passion of close relationship in any family, it results in divorce. If a person has grown up in a psychological unhealthy family, it can grow worsen. Negligence,

suicide, crime, mental retardation and ill manners are common among divorced persons. (Alison: 2006)

### **Remarriage and Blended Families:**

Remarriages of divorced parents often lead to mingled families bearing stepparent and step children. But Cherlin in 1981 suggested, such blended families can trigger complications and troubles for the parents, step parents, and step children. (E. Mavis: 2009)

Statistically, the marriage of divorced people are somewhat more likely to end in divorce than are first marriages, but this does not mean that a given marriage is any less happy than the first. Remarried divorced individuals have more problems than they had in their first marriages. Yet, most of them rate their rebuilt marriages very happily and most of them stay married. (Evelyn: 1977) Popular assumptions are that parental remarriage has a detrimental effect on children. According to many researchers step children would likely be exhibit mental, emotional and interpersonal problems. (Ganong: 1984)

### **Step Children/Step Parents:**

His children, her children, and their children may all be part of the constituted families of the formerly married. Brothers and sisters, half brothers, half sisters, “own” children and stepchildren all share the home of the parents who has been married before. Some of the step children may be occasionally available according to the visiting privileges of the parent and the age of child.

The stereotype of step mother is inconsiderate and lacking in motherliness. We see in our society instances where the step mother relationship has worked out in the best possible way. Even under the most favourable circumstances, however, the role of the step mother is a difficult one. (Oliver: 1956)

Step children necessarily have at least three parents and sometimes more, which makes for divided authority and the “you” are not my father/mother type rebellion of the older child. Establishment of good relations between acquired parents and children has been considered one of the most difficult of all human assignments. The general consensus is that very young and growing up children tend to assimilate a new parent more easily than adolescents.

Different scholars review that step children and their new parents, such families experience more stress and less cohesiveness than do families broken by divorce. Stepmothers have more difficult roles to play than do stepfathers, especially when there are adolescents in the family.

Stepdaughters tend to have extreme reactions towards their parents. (Evelyn: 1977)

Parenting can make or break the family, a society and a civilization. Civilization building is not ending and not a one time job; rather it is a way of life and a dynamic continuous process. It has a beginning but not end. Civilization continuous to grow, continue and develop. When children are raised in a state of fear and oppression, they become afraid to take risks and afraid to make decisions. (Hisham: 2013)

### **Difficulties Children Face:**

A child behavior is its origin in the attitude, personality and intelligence of his/her parents. Child personality is partly the product of environment. Broadly speaking he/she is also under the strong influence of teacher's personality and also to the attitude behavior personality of the parents, siblings and other children. (Hisham: 2013) Actually some behaviorists claimed that behavioral problems have their origin before birth and often before conception. Rejection in happiness and lack of love in child's life may well affect the next generations. A parent who was regularly beaten and he chastised may grow a habit to apply the same treatment on his/her children. The social class in which they are brought up, by the personality and attitude of their parents and by the love and feelings of security or lack of it also affects the children. (Hisham: 2013) Parents, damaging aggressive behavior results in child beating and non accidental injuries. Children are effected by spacing of birth also by the number of siblings, smaller the gap greater the jealousies among siblings. Among the first born there is excess of genius and delinquents.

Children, particularly more established Adolescents, can without much of a stretch wind up plainly worried by change, especially when numerous progressions happen on the double. (Evelyn: 1977) Adolescents are regularly the ones most influenced by the mixing of a family: After Children have encountered the separation of their parents; they may think that it's hard to acclimate to another parent and that parent's new standards, and they may express their dissatisfaction with behavioural or enthusiastic upheavals.

A few youngsters may likewise battle with affections for the new parent: Before the mixing, a kid may see a parent's loved one as a companion, yet when the critical different turns into a parent, the child may disdain what he or she sees as a "substitution" of his or her other parent. (Evelyn: 1977) Children may likewise be hesitant to confide in a stepparent, particularly the individuals who may feel surrendered by a natural parent following a separation. Further, when the youngster comes to tend to the stepparent, he or

she may battle with the new feelings, as the child may feel that adoration for the stepparent some way or another sells out his or her biological parent.

Sibling's competition can likewise go up against another measurement, as adolescents may feel constrained to seek consideration and predominance in the new family. A child may likewise stress that his or her biological parents may come to incline toward the child's stepsiblings.

Sadness can likewise be a factor in the move. At the point when a remarriage happens following the demise of one parent, a kid may at present be lamenting the loss of the other parent and could be additionally activated by the remarriage. Youngsters in these circumstances will frequently require more space and time to complete the lamenting procedure before they can come to acknowledge the new parent.

### **Objectives of The Study:**

The broad objective of this study was to identify the overall consequences of the step-families on the children. To fulfill this broad objective, the following specific objectives were identified:

The effect of step-families on a child's personality and his/her social development.

To explore the consequence of family step-family on achieving education.

### **Literature Review:**

Family is the fundamental section of society. A broken home/step-family can damage and confuse an individual's world. This is natural from infancy through the teen years. Different researchers pointed out broken home and its consequences in their studies.

Popular assumptions are that parental remarriage has a detrimental effect on children. According to many researchers step children would likely be exhibit mental, emotional and interpersonal problems. In (1959) Goode gathered interview data from some four hundred divorcees, who were mothers. His conclusion was necessarily tentative. He questioned the assumption that does divorce leads to proper adjustment in children? He summarized that broken home may lead to a child juvenile delinquency. It was found that all mothers were worried about the effects of divorce on their children. (F. Ivan: 1957)

Ayodele (2007) stated that the environment where a child finds himself/herself goes a long way in determining his learning ability and ultimately his academic performance in school. (Hadi: 2000)

Finally, a single parent faces doubled responsibilities requiring time, attention and money of the parent. Hence, less attention is paid to the education of the child. The teachers commonly describe children from single parent as more hostile, aggressive, anxious, fearful, hyperactive and distractive than children from intact family. (Bray: 1998)

Burton (2012) reports that a recent study by University of Notre Dame and the University of Rochester revealed those parents' marital problems can leave a lasting impact on their young children. Researchers found that when young children witnessed conflict between their parents, this eventually leads to issues in their teenage years, including depression and anxiety. (Burton: 2012)

Paul R. Amato and Alan Booth in (1996) pointed out after divorce, the frequency of contact between children and parent left the house, mostly fathers, is decreased. Children's relation with mothers is observed as same after separation in most of the cases as before divorce; but in some cases, it is found declining long after divorce. It might be because of guardian mother's remarriage. This study also shows that the fathers and mothers who later broke up with each other had very harsh attitude with their sons in comparison to the couples who remained together. Children of divorced parents have more behavioral and academic issues than those whose parents never set apart.

Additional research has found that mothers have more positive relationships with their own (biological) children than with their step-children, that mothers monitor their biological children more than their step-children, and that mothers experienced more conflict with their biological children than with their step-children. (Henderson: 1999)

Dr. Fouzia Khurshi and Sufiana Khatoon in (2012) pointed out in their study that divorce is increasing at alarming rate even in Islamic countries. Addictions of alcohol, gambling or any other such habit can also cause the end of this relationship. Increasing divorce rate is directly proportional to the crime rate in society. Children become morally and emotionally weak and they start showing poor academic performance.

### **Methodology**

The researcher had used the Quantitative research method. The method of sampling used to carry in this study is purposive and snowball sampling. The sample size for this study consisted of one seventy (170) children under the age group 10 to 18 year from break up and blended families. Purposive and snowball sampling technique includes identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced

with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011). The selected universes for the research were, SOS Village, Garrison academy, Iqra School and Darul Falah at Alamdar Road Quetta.

Interview Schedule techniques are used for data collection purpose. Researchers used this technique because many of the respondents were children, who had difficulty to fill up the questionnaire.

### Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed through the use of simple percentages. Tables were prepared through SPSS and frequencies were put in to these tables through bi-variati and multi-variati analysis. Frequency distribution expresses the number of cases within each value of a variable as a percentage or proportion of the total number of cases. It was calculated through following formula.

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100$$

Where

- P = Percentage
- F = Frequency of Classes
- N = Total frequency

**Bivariate Analysis:** Helps you analyze the relationship between two variables.

**Multivariate Analysis:** Helps you identify the underlying relationships among sets of variables.

The basic purpose of both multivariate regression analysis and bivariate analysis is to find patterns and exceptions in data. Techniques of this type commonly include regression analysis, conjoint analysis, and other modeling techniques.

The inferential statistics was used during bi-variati analysis to explore the association of two variables and the result was verified.

Table -1: Age, Sex and Marital Status of the Respondents

Age (yrs.)	Freq.	Sex of the Marital Status					Total
		Male	Female	Single	Engaged	Married	
<b>10-12</b>	13	13	0	13	0	0	13
<b>13-15</b>	66	66	0	66	0	0	66
<b>16-18</b>	91	11	80	60	20	11	91
<b>Total</b>	170	90	80	139	20	11	170

Table-1: Age, Sex and Marital Status of the Respondents:

The table highlights the situation of early marriages in Pakistan even in the urban areas. There can be many reasons of early marriages. In Pakistani context, as soon as a girl becomes of age, she is no more considered as a child and mostly, this happens at the age of 13-15 years. The second reason is that in case of single parent or orphan hood, who is there to protect an orphan or fatherless girl of 16-18 years of age if own parents are not there. In Pakistan such girls are mostly put to work as domestic workers and then every injustice is meted out to them even rape. So why not to marry her out and protect her chastity. The table supports this fact as all the married respondents were girls.

Table-2: Second Marriage/Family of Parents / Frequency of your Visits to them

Do your father or mother has second family/ Marriage?	Freq.	How often you visit your other single parent?					Total
		Once a week	Once a month	Once in 6 Month	Once a Year	Never/ Don't Meet	
<b>Yes</b>	101	33	20	39	8	1	101
<b>No</b>	69	0	0	0	0	69	69
<b>Total</b>	170	33	20	39	8	70	170

Second Marriage/Family of parents / Frequency of your visits to them:

If we look in the figures the ratio of children who don't meet their parents is very low but other proportion is also down. Because in childhood it's very much important that the kids have a proper provision to meet their parents regularly so it can overcome their grievances and negative effects of step family on their personality and character.

Table-3: Respondent's Status in the Family and Attitude of Siblings towards each other.



Respondents Status in Family	Freq.	Respondent's attitude towards step siblings		Attitude of step siblings towards the respondent		Total
		Good	Bad	Good	Bad	
<b>Oldest</b>	73	48	25	49	24	73
<b>Youngest</b>	61	0	61	0	61	61
<b>Middle</b>	36	0	36	0	36	36
<b>Total</b>	170	48	122	49	121	170

Respondent's Status in the family and attitude of siblings towards each other:

In this table the status of respondents is shown in family and if we look into the attitude of step siblings attitude towards respondents in oldest 49/73 (67.1%) said well, whereas, 24/73 (32.8%) said badly. In youngest 61/61 (100%) said badly, and in middle number of category students 36/36 (100%) respondents were reported that their step siblings attitude was also bad towards them.

This table obviously a feature the unfavorable effects of broken homes and mixed families on most youthful and middle age youngsters that they in early age take more negative impacts on them and it at last effects on their tutoring, prepping and socialization too.

Table-4: How Step Family Impacts on Studies.

Respondent's Gender	Freq.	How does Broken Family Impacts your Studies					Total
		Lack of participation	lack of concentration	Avoid to go school	Low grades	None	
<b>Male</b>	90	35	42	13	0	0	90
<b>Female</b>	80	0	0	32	38	10	80
<b>Total</b>	170	35	42	45	38	10	170

How Step Family Impacts on Studies:

The table highlights the situation that the ratio avoid to go school and low grades of girls is higher than boys due to financial burdens as girls engage themselves in different income resources to overcome the financial crises. On the other hand mothers want their boys to attend the school regularly so they

may support them financially in future. But the figure shows that a high ratio of concentration and participation in studies is low in boys due to lack of mental clarity and disturb minds and they are more exposed to society than girls.

Table- 5: Harassment by Step Parents and its Nature:

Respondents Gender	Freq.	Ever harassed by step parents?		If yes, nature of harassment			Total
		Yes	No	Verbal	Physical	Sexual	
<b>Male</b>	90	90	0	83	7	0	90
<b>Female</b>	80	58	22	0	52	6	80
<b>Total</b>	170	148	22	83	59	6	170

#### Harassment by Step Parents and its Nature:

In female respondents 52/80 (65%) children were reported physical harassment by their step parents and 6/80 (7.5%) were reported sexual harassment by their step parents. The victim of physical and sexual harassment ratio was high in girl's respondents. The table features the circumstance that young girls generally live in surroundings of home so they can be effectively casualty of any sort of badgering by their progression guardians. Though, a boy normally live out of the home so they are a casualty of verbal mishandle by their step parents.

Younger parents were more likely to abuse children than older parents. However, there was no evidence suggesting that stepchildren were at increased risk for injury.

### Results and Discussion

The details of the analyses and discussion are narrated as under:

Educational impacts of step/blended-family on child academic performance.

The figures highlights the situation that the ratio avoid to go school and low grades of girls is higher than boys due to financial burdens as girls engage themselves in different income resources to overcome the financial crises. Individual especially at the time of disturbance at home cannot study. It can be due to lack of attention towards their children. And also individual they cannot pay attention towards their study as they are very much affected by the fight of their parents. On the other hand mothers want their boys to attend the school regularly so they may support them financially in future. But the figure shows that a high ratio of concentration and participation in studies is low in boys due to lack of mental clarity and disturb minds and they are more exposed to society than girls.

Igbinosa (2014) also sentenced that such individuals cannot concentrate towards their studies because their mind is diverted to do anything for their parents and make them unite at any cost. Their focus is only their parents. They make everything else as their second priority.

Such individual in their class cannot participate as they are upset and they think of their family clashes all the time. They get scared of every one because they think that if someone has asked about their parents, they don't have answer of that question that's why they avoid participating.

Usually these individual do not have their separate room because they have to stay with the parent to whom they are living with. Due to this they cannot work on time. They cannot study in their own style as once they were used to with.

### **Patterns of relationship with the family members.**

In response of pattern of relationship with step siblings and step parents 70.6% respondents replied that their feeling for step siblings and parents is not good and young individuals couldn't have dreamt to live without their both parents. But when they came to know the cruel decision of their parent's separation, they have difficulty to accept the reality and they make their own fantasy world. They think that something good will happen soon and everything will be normal. Their lives will turn back to normal and happy and whenever they try to accept the bitter truth. They become frustrated and depressed.

Stress in the marital relationship is related to sibling relationship quality in that children respond to their parent's stress by experience negative emotions such as distress and anger, and these negative emotions are often directed towards others, especially siblings.

Anderson (1999) also found that young ladies were more probable than young men to have more watched inspiration in their kin connections (paying

little respect to on the off chance that they were full, half, or step kin). Furthermore, young ladies had larger amounts of compassion in their connections than did young men, yet there were no huge contrasts amongst young men and young ladies in the measure of friendship displayed in the kin relationship. The examination directed by Baxter, Braithwaite, et al. (2004) verified that most stepchildren do in certainty fancy closeness with their stepparent. The longing originates from the stepchild's view of what family life ought to be, and at times, enables the stepchild to grasp the new stepparent for offering help and different characteristics that the family needed preceding the remarriage. If we look in the figures the ratio of children who don't meet their biological parents is very low but other proportion is also down. Because in childhood it's very much important that the kids have a proper provision to meet their parents regularly so it can overcome their grievances and negative effects of step family on their personality and character.

Patterns of psychological and social alienation faced by the respondents?

In response of psychological impacts being in step and blended family 22.9% respondents replied they got aggressive, while 12.9% reply was no, that they never experienced harassment by their parent. Individuals from step home have difficulty in making future relations as they cannot trust others easily. They made strong perception that every marital relation has an end as their parents had. Hence, they may run from commitment and avoid making relationships.

In case of polygamy, individual have difficulty to accept a stranger person as their mother or father. They suffer from emotional pain and get disturbed and as well as facing difficulty in adjusting. Most researchers agree that children from divorced families show proper adjustment than their counterparts in non-divorced families. But those experienced multiple divorces are at greater risk.

Children in blended families may likewise encounter more anxiety in light of the fact that, as recommended by Cherlin (1978), the parental and stepparent parts need clear definitions. Another conceivable clarification, obtained from transformative brain science, is that parents support their own particular posterity over their stepchildren.

Mostly the researchers focus on physically broken homes and indicated that many children are the products of broken families. For example a summary conducted; between (1929) and (1958) reported that children processed by officials for delinquency are almost twice as likely came from physical

broken homes. In the (1940's) a psychiatrist gave psychological tests to one hundred young criminal offenders, and the result showed that many felt hostile, aggressive, and sexually confused as a result of long term exposure to family conflict. Other social scientists indicate that, quarrelling or any form of conflict between parents, is more closely associated with delinquency.

There is abundant evidence that children living in stepfamilies are more likely to experience sexual abuse. And children living with unmarried parents are also at risk for abuses including physical, sexual and emotional abuse. However, it has not been clearly established if stepchildren are injured as a result of their abuse more often than biological children. To get a better look at abuse rates among biological and stepchildren, Stewart J. D'Alessio of the Department of Criminal Justice at Florida International University recently examined data from more than 130 cities that was used as part of a larger study on abuse incident reporting. He looked at the biological status of the children, as well as the socioeconomic condition of their environment, as it has been suggested that disadvantaged communities have higher levels of stepchildren abuse.

According to this study, in female respondents 52/80 (65%) children were reported physical harassment by their step parents and 6/80 (7.5%) were reported sexual harassment by their step parents. The victim of physical and sexual harassment ratio was high in girl's respondents. The table features the circumstance that young girls generally live in surroundings of home so they can be effectively casualty of any sort of badgering by their progression guardians. Though, a boy normally live out of the home so they are a casualty of verbal mishandle by their step parents. It is VERY difficult to be a stepchild, more difficult than being a step-parent. Being a stepchild often means you are unwanted and unloved...your place in the family is not a secure one if you have a stepfather/stepmother who hates you and doesn't want you around. Lot of step-parents is jealous because the child is a constant reminder that their husband or wife used to be with somebody else.

## **Conclusion**

This is concluded that family is incredibly significant because it influence our individuality and behavior. The relations and family look after our self-respect and concerned with our prosperity. Family also impart us wisdom, culture and traditions that lead us all through our lives which are the standards we carry universally. Family is the building block of a successful person. Family is the first friend; first brick and first memory of a person. It can either make you or break you into pieces. Family breakup and remarriage

of parent has adverse effects on children and whole family. But there are ways to minimize the emotional impact that individual usually feel in these kinds of families. Though study summarizes the troubles and problems crop up due to family breakup. But if the single and re-married parents sincerely put their strength to give a secure, caring and effective setting to their children, it might reduce the strike of a step/blended family.

### **Recommendations**

By taking into consideration the above scenario, certain recommendations to further improve the status of broken families and its victims “specially children” the following recommendation have been put:

Divorced parents are advised to help their children talk about and share things about each other so that the children can integrate the two parents lives and life style into a whole some, meaningful system of living. Anger, hurt, jealousy, and other negative emotions may make such an adjustment hard for both adults and children.

Parents should pay attention and provide emotional affection to their kids because whatever time they had to spend enjoying has been passed. It's the children's who have to grow up and suffer.

Some things need to be closely monitored. Avoid the excitement to attempt for fixing problems all at once. Time is required for children to adjust with new environment. Natural parents need to initiate many changes with them even in small steps including seeking long-term solutions rather than quick change. As much as possible, provide children stability in rituals and relationships. When parents get divorced or remarry a lot of things changed for children and it is fruitful for them to realize that people are around them who love / care them and have a fun altogether.

Kids have a proper provision to meet their biological parents regularly so it can overcome their grievances and negative effects of step family on their personality and character building. Both partners may need to accept the children and respect them, more especially it is needed to own the children. Children need parents who care enough to not only give them warmth and nurturance but also set reasonable limits. After a divorce or separation, parents are as important to children as before the divorce or separation. Divorced parents need to provide children with as much support as possible. Divorced parents can find people who provide practical help and with whom they can talk about their problems.

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