Examination of the Factors Affecting the Adjustment of the Children of Divorced Families

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the systemic relationships in the school and family environments that may influence the divorce adjustment of children aged 6-11 from the point of views of their parents, teachers and school counselors. Bronfenbrenner's Socio-Ecological Theory provides the basis for this study, explaining how personal characteristics and context interact to influence human development and behavior. In this qualitative study, phenomenological design was used to provide a comprehensive understanding of the children's adjustment to parental divorce. Thematic content analysis was used to analyze 27 interviews with 9 parents, 8 teachers, and 3 psychological counselors of 10 children. The findings reveal that children's adjustment to parental divorce examined under five themes: a) family microsystem, b) school microsystem, c) mesosystem d) exosystem and e) macrosystem. The first theme is divided into four categories: Family structure, custodial parent-child relationships, noncustodial parent-child relationships and relationships with root family. The second theme is divided into three categories: The teacher-student relationship, peer relationships, and the school counselor-student relationship. The third theme is divided into two categories: Teacher-parent collaboration and school counselor-parent collaboration. The fourth theme is divided into three categories: Dynamics of the education, law, and economic systems. The fifth theme is divided into two categories: The socioeconomic structure and the sociocultural structure. As a result, supporting children's adjustment to divorce requires a comprehensive approach and collaborative interventions at multiple levels.

Divorce is one of the situational family crises that today's families are likely to encounter, resulting in drastic changes in family structure. According to the data of the Turkish Statistical Institute [TUIK] (2022) on divorces in 2021, 36% of divorces occur in the first five years of marriage, followed by marriages of six to ten years with a rate of 27%. It is stated that 56.15% of the divorces are seen in families with children. Nazlı (2020) emphasized that 800-900 thousand families are exposed to stress factors per year on average in the pre-legal, legal and post-legal divorce process, and approximately two and a half million people are affected by this process. Although divorce does not have a positive or negative meaning on its own, the process of reorganization in the family brings with various difficulties in the short and long term (Sayan Karahan, 2022).

Divorce means much more than the legal termination of marriage of two people who are in a marital relationship. The transitional stage of divorce is complex phenomenon and occurs at different levels such as the inner level of individual psychological dynamics, the interactional level of couple and family dynamics,

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and the outer level, which includes the wider social system. In this process, the fact that the people who decide to divorce are also parents complicates the situation (Johnston et al., 2009). Although the effect of divorce on spouses is undeniable, it is frequently emphasized in the literature that the group most affected by divorce is children (Bryner, 2001). Considering that divorce puts a strain on even adults' coping skills, results in intense emotions over a variety of losses and uncertainties, and is challenging to adapt to, it is not surprising that children's coping mechanisms are inadequate, and that the divorce process endangers their development. However, divorce has a 'potential' impact on children. This idea emphasizes that children might not always suffer adverse effects from the process and that the outcomes are highly dependent on factors related to the child, parent, and divorce process (Amato, 2000).

The findings regarding the effects of divorce on children, as well as their magnitude and persistence, can be described as complex (van der Wal, Finkenauer ve Visser, 2019). According to some studies, the effects of divorce on children are irreversible and devastating, and children bear a traumatic burden in terms of psychological well-being and social relationships even years after the divorce (Amato, 1994; Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004). On the other hand, some studies show that less than a quarter of the children of divorced families face serious or persistent difficulties, and most children adjust well after the initial impact of divorce (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982; Walsch, 2012). Furthermore, Wallerstein and Lewis (2004) stated that while some children have seemed to adjust to divorce, they may experience difficulties in later developmental stages; in other words, they introduced the concept of the 'sleeping effect of divorce'. However, a few of those studies have shown that as a result of their parents' divorce, some children experience positive emotions such as happiness and relief (ASAGEM, 2011; Strksen, Thorsen, Verland ve Brown, 2012). In this context, it is fairly obvious that the outcomes of studies on the impact of divorce on children are complicated and requires extensive research.

Divorce is a stressful and anxiety-inducing process for children. Although many children are capable of sensing negativity in the family environment prior to divorce, the news of divorce is frequently met with surprise (Hetherington, et al., 1982). Following the shock reaction, children are confused and anxious about what will happen to themselves and their parents, and what will change in their lives (Turkarslan, 2007). On the other hand, the nature and intensity of the conflicts experienced in the family environment prior to the divorce decision can cause children to exhibit various negative reactions much earlier and can also differentiate children's reactions to the divorce decision (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1999). After divorce, children may be concerned about another loss or sudden change in their family, and they may worry about their parents' well-being for many years. This anxiety is linked to the belief that their own emotional survival is dependent on keeping parents safe. It is frequently combined with fears of being abandoned, lost, ignored, or even destroyed in parental conflict (Johnston et al., 2009). It is clear that the children are concerned that the only people whose parents are divorced are their own parents, and that everything will be terrible, the parent with whom they do not live refuses to communicate with them, and they will be abandoned or left alone. Children who find themselves in this situation frequently become annoyed and blame themselves. The intensity and quality of these feelings may vary depending on the severity of the losses associated with the divorce process, and whether they can receive adequate economic, emotional, and social support. As a result, children may exhibit more intense emotional symptoms, ranging from sadness to depression. (Cangelosi, 1997; Kleinsorge & Covitz, 2012).

In response to the intense emotions and individual tendencies they experience during this process, children may engage in behaviors such as internalization (eg., depression) and externalization (eg. aggression and impulsivity). Additionally, it is reported that kids may exhibit regressive behavior at this time (Weaver & Schofield, 2015). In this context, children's anger issues, insecurity, depression, poor self-perception, fear of rejection, lack of self-confidence, low self-esteem, low self-regulation, deterioration in perception, low social responsibility, proclivity to crime, and risk of encountering problems in social relationships are all mentioned (Amato 2014; Kelly & Emery, 2003). In addition to psychological and social problems, they can exhibit

symptoms with physical consequences (eg., body aches and digestive problems) (Luecken & Fabricius, 2003). These behaviors mentioned in first group can be observed in the child's interactions with his parents, peers, teachers, and close environment (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1999). It is noteworthy that individual dynamics such as the child's age, gender, temperament and character traits, and ability to recover reveal that not every child is affected by this process at the same rate, and even if the effects of the event are the same, the reactions and timing of these reactions may differ (Turkarslan, 2007). Having a position where the child can prove and develop his or her abilities, having a friendship relationship prior to the divorce process, and having positive temperament characteristics such as being extroverted and having sense of humour are among the protective factors that support adjustment to divorce (Emery & Forehand, 1996). In addition, children's self-esteem and perceived control may be resources that buffer the impact of parental divorce on children's adjustment, either as a promoter or a barrier (van der Wall et al., 2019).

It is stated that common reactions of children may differ depending on the child's developmental stage (Hetherington, 1989). According to studies, the child's symptoms increase with starting school and peer interaction, and the reactions given are mostly expressed in behavioral dimensions. Disobedience, reacting against the teacher, jealousy in peer relationships, power struggles with peers, blaming parents, and aversion to school can all be observed (Saglam, 2011; Turkarslan, 2007). In addition to the developmental period, many situations such as predivorce period, the announcement of the divorce decision, the changes experienced after the divorce, and the regulation of post-divorce relations, have an impact on the adjustment of the child. Changes in the relationships (with children and each other) and parenting skills, new family dynamics, the child's social support opportunities and individual resources in the family environment all come to the fore in terms of adjustment (Kelly & Emery, 2003).

Negative emotions experienced by parents as a spouse have an impact on their parenting abilities. In this context, it is possible that the parent spends less quality time with the child, is more reactive to the child in a negative manner, establishes less emotional and physical closeness with the child, is less supportive, provides less control, and fails to provide consistent discipline to the child (Hetherington & Cligempeel, 1992). The child may feel inadequate and helpless, and may turn to inappropriate resources to meet his physical and emotional needs. From another perspective, the child observes how the parents cope with the divorce, so the parents' coping behaviors send important messages to the child. On the other hand, parental adjustment appears to be positively related to the ability to form a co-parenting relationship and receive social support, both of which have positive effects on children's adjustment (Jacobs et al., 1986; Stallman & Ohan, 2016). After the divorce, single-parent families may form new family structures that include close relatives such as grandparents-aunt or step-parent. Although it may be advantageous for these people to assist the mother or father with child care, there may also be risks such as the weakening the mother-child or father-child relationship and child neglect (Baker et al., 2008).

According to the research findings, one of the most significant changes associated with divorce is a weakening or complete break in the relationship with the other parent (Peters & Ehrenberg, 2008; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Persistent conflicts, which are common following divorce, make it difficult for the child to cope with the divorce and may result in increased emotional arousal and difficulty in managing negative emotions (Davies & Cummings, 1994). Conflict-related emotions that parents struggle to manage can lead to dysfunctional behaviors such as limiting and sabotaging child-parent interaction, either explicitly or implicitly, through motivations to protect the child, keep the child on their side, or harm the other parent (Bancroft & Silverman, 2002). Children from divorced families are said to have more negative sibling and peer relationships because they reflect family dynamics and communication patterns (Waddell, Pepler & Moore, 2001).

In the aftermath of divorce, the school environment is just as important as the family environment. School is a transitional environment in which children spend more time after the family -possibly more time than the family- and open up to the outside world by interacting with adults and peers except the family members. As a result, schools are not only a place where students' academic development is supported, but they also play an important role in their emotional and social development (Domitrovich et al., 2017). The difficulties that children face as they adjust to divorce are mirrored in the school environment (Havermans, Botterman &

Matthijs, 2014; Wood, Repetti & Roesch, 2004). Through the social comparison process, children can evaluate themselves differently from their peers; this inadequacy can result in outcomes such as a decrease in academic interest, withdrawal from peer groups and bullying (Wallerstein, 1986; van der Wall et al., 2019). On the other hand, children of divorced families, may face psychological exclusion and labeling because this connection is reciprocal (Gulay, 2011). The finding that children who has alternative areas will be more protected against adverse consequences in order to arrive at a more accurate perception about themselves and their situation in the world highlights the significance of the school environment and puts the idea of trauma-sensitive schools (Plumb, Bush & Kersevich, 2016) and school based family counseling (Gerrard, Carter & Ribera, 2019) on the table. From this point of view, it can concluded that every member of the school system has variety of roles and duties to support children.

Although the findings on whether and how parental divorce affects children's adjustment are not always clear in the literature, there is a consensus that children who experience parental divorce are at risk for a variety of adverse developmental outcomes. In the related literature, internalizing/externalizing problems and academic achievement are frequently included as indicators of adjustment. However, it is assumed that the child's adjustment to divorce is a phenomenon that is too broad to be evaluated based on the symptoms experienced by the child. When studies on children's adjustment to divorce are examined, it's concluded that understanding the relationship between the concepts of 'divorce' and 'child' requires a systemic approach that includes individual and environmental dynamics. In this context, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory (1979, Akt. Bronfenbrenner, 1992) appears to be useful in understanding the experiences of children from divorced families. A five-layer influencing model suggests that the child's environment influences their development by interacting with the child's individual characteristics. The microsystem is the first layer and has the most influence on the child's development. Family, teacher, and peer groups are examples of microsystems. The mesosystem is the complex dynamics formed by the interaction of microsystems. The interaction of factors in the school and family environment is referred to as a mesosystem. The third layer, the exosystem, consists of resources, practices, and procedures that are not directly involved in the child but have an impact on it. The next layer, the macrosystem, addresses issues concerning the general structure of society. Within the scope of the chronosystem, the reflection of socio-historical and socio-cultural environmental conditions on the life of the individual and their effects on their experiences over time are evaluated. This model is based on the principles that a) systems affect each other, b) changes in one system may not be sufficient for change, c) family members affect each other, and d) culture has an effect on development.

It is seen that the child is affected by the divorce process at different levels with the effect of the dynamics involving the individual, familial and wider environment and society (Emery & Forehand, 1996; Fagan & Churchill, 2012). Increasing divorce rates, as well as the short- and long-term effects of divorce, highlight the importance of identifying the mechanisms that affect children and shaping interventions. When the growing number of researches on the factors affecting the child's adjustment to divorce in school and family living areas is examined, it is thought that these two areas are not examined ecologically in a unity and relatedness, and this study can fill the gap in the literature. In this context, an examination of the factors influencing the child's adjustment to the divorce process, in accordance with ecological theory, will be beneficial on both an individual and social level. In this study, the adjustment process of the children and the possible hindering and/or helpful factors within their ecological systems tried to understand from the point of view of the children's parents, teachers, and counselors. As a consequence, the purpose of this study is to investigate the systemic relationships in the school and family environment that may influence the divorce adjustment of children aged 6-11. The following questions are investigated within the scope of the research:

1. Which factors influence children's adjustment to divorce in the family life area?

2. Which factors influence children's adjustment to divorce in the school setting?

3. What other systemic and environmental factors influence children's adjustment to divorce?

Method

This is a qualitative study that employs the phenomenological method. With the assumption that social reality is a phenomenon that varies depending on context, time, and culture and cannot be generalized; qualitative research is the researcher's attempt to make sense of things in his natural environment using inductive and deductive approaches in terms of the meanings people assign to events. These applications turn the world into a collection of representations such as field notes, interviews, speeches, photographs, and recordings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Patton, 2014). The phenomenological pattern provides rich data and serves as a guiding framework for understanding cases with insufficient information (Yildirim & Simsek, 2016). The primary goal of phenomenology is to reduce individual observations of a phenomenon to a universal explanation (van Manen, 2017). In this study phenomenological approach was utilized to comprehensively reveal the experience of children's adjustment to divorce. Also deductive approach was adopted as Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory has given direction to data analysis and the name of the main themes.

Study Group

The study group of this research consists of the nine custodial parents, eight classroom teachers, and three school counselors of ten primary school children whose parents are divorced. Criterion-based sampling and snowball sampling methods, both of which are classified as purposeful sampling types, were used to determine the study group. Criterion-based sampling is the study of situations that meet a set of predetermined criteria using a list of criteria created by the researcher or pre-prepared (Cresswell, 2013). In this study, the criteria for the parents are that at least one year has passed since the separation/divorce and that the parent preferably has custody/continues to live with the child. These criteria were determined based on the literature. According to Amato (2000), legal divorce is not determinative in terms of children's adjustment, and studies show that various difficulties occur for 1-3 years following changes in family structure (Korkut, 2003). Also the criterion of having known the child for at least one semester period was determined for school counselors and teachers to get sufficient information. In cases where it is difficult to reach the units about the research subject, snowball/chain sampling provides access to other individuals through individuals who have comprehensive knowledge about the subject. Considering the research subject, it is seen that this method is also functional especially in interviews with parents.

Demographic information about the study group is summarized in two tables below. The first table includes demographic information of children and parents.

Table 1. Demographic information of children and parents

Code	Age	Gender	Divorce/Separation	Elapsed time	Custody	Parents' Age	Number of Children
C1	7	Boy	Legal divorce	3 years	Mother(E1)	30	2
C2	7	Boy	Legal divorce	3 years	Mother(E1)	30	2
C3	9	Boy	Legal divorce	5 years	Mother(E2)	34	1
C4	11	Girl	Separation	3 years	Mother(E3)	31	2
C5	9	Boy	Legal divorce	4 years	Father (E5)	30	1
C6	10	Girl	Legal divorce	7 year	Mother(E4)	34	1
C7	10	Girl	Legal divorce	8 year	Father (E6)	36	1
C8	10	Girl	Legal divorce	5 year	Mother(E8)	35	4
C9	6	Boy	Seperation	5 year	Mother(E7)	31	1
C10	9	Boy	Legal divorce	8 year	Mother(E9)	34	1

The second table includes demographic information of teachers and school counselors.

Table 2. Demographic information of teachers and school counselors

Occupation	Code	Age	Gender	Professional experience	Acquaintance time
Teacher	O1	23	Female	6 months	6 months
Teacher	O2	43	Female	21 years	3 years
Teacher	O3	50	Female	28 years	4 years
Teacher	O4	30	Female	7 years	3 years
Teacher	O5	36	Female	12 years	1 years
Teacher	O6	40	Female	18 years	2 years
Teacher	O7	50	Female	25 years	3 years
Teacher	O8	45	Female	20 years	3 years
School counselor*	P1	32	Female	8 years	1-4 years
School counselor	P2	38	Male	13 years	1-4 years
School counselor *	P3	35	Female	10 years	1-4 years

Note: * Had a postgraduate degree

Data Gathering

Permissions were obtained before the data collection process. First, draft interview questions were prepared separately for parents, teachers, and school counselors. Second, the views of two experts were solicited. Between December 2021 and February 2022, 27 interviews were conducted as part of the process. Interviews with parents lasted approximately 45 minutes, interviews with teachers lasted approximately 30 minutes, and interviews with school counselors lasted approximately 15-20 minutes. Particular attention was paid to spend time with the parents and to create a sense of trust before the interviews. At the end of the interview, the parents were emotionally controlled and various therapeutic skills were used to leave them with positive feelings. During the data collection process, supervision support was provided by the thesis advisor.

Analysis of Data

The fundamental process in qualitative data analysis is content analysis. Content analysis is defined as a qualitative data reduction and interpretation effort that aims to determine basic coherences and meanings from large amounts of qualitative data (Patton, 2014). Preparing and organizing data, coding the data, bringing the codes together and reducing them to themes, and finally presenting the data in the form of figures, tables, or a discussion are all part of data analysis. In line with this process, the audio recordings obtained from the interviews were transcribed and field notes were organized within this framework. During the coding phase, the data was read repeatedly until mastery and comprehension were achieved. Following that, repetitive regularities were labeled with keywords or phrases, revealing the first patterns. The interviews were then meticulously handled and coded line by line. Following the tabulation of the obtained codes, cross-case analysis was carried out, and similar codes repeated in different interviews were reviewed and arranged to ensure expression similarity. Then, based on the literature and the statements of the interviewees, the possible relationships between these codes were evaluated. The related codes were attempted to be combined under categories and themes, which are larger meaningful units.

Several steps have been taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the data analysis process (Creswell, 2013). The researcher began the phenomenological analysis by "bracketing" the past experiences, perspectives, and comments on the subject that shaped the approach and interpretations of the study. This has enabled the researcher to become aware of her prejudices regarding the phenomenon and to examine it from a new and open perspective, without assigning meaning to it prematurely. In the study, observation and interview data were combined and interpreted using theoretical approaches related to divorce adjustment, family systems, and child development. A significant amount of time has been spent in the field to thoroughly understand the individuals and the context. During the interview, issues that appeared contradictory or incomprehensible were brought back into focus and presented to the participants for verification. In the writing phase of the research, intense description was used, and the comments were supported by quotations. Throughout the research,

collaboration with the thesis advisor was established, and feedback was provided when needed. Furtermore, supervisor has a role as an internal auditor of the data analysis. As a result of participant triangulation, the investigated phenomenon was examined and evaluated by various observers from various perspectives.

Role of the Research Team

The research team consists of a faculty member and a graduate student working in the field of psychological counseling and guidance. The main researcher is the graduate student who also the first author of the study. She had a undergraduate degree in the same major and has studied family counseling, divorce counseling, and qualitative research at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Besides formal education process, she made observations in Ankara Family Courts and schools before and during the thesis process. Field observations have been an enriching experience for the researcher in shaping the research process and interpreting the research findings. Furthermore, she received feedback on the interviews from the thesis advisor throughout the process, allowing her to identify any biases that may have affected the research process. During this process, the researcher discovered that she had a child-centered approach. The other member of the research team, the thesis advisor, has 30 years of professional experience and specializes in school and family counseling. She teaches family counseling and divorce counseling at the undergraduate and graduate levels. She worked as a consultant and supervisor on this study. As previously stated, she also plays a role in the data analysis process.

Findings and Comments

The findings obtained from the interviews can be classified into five themes: Factors related a) family microsystem, b) school microsystem, c) mesosystem d) exosystem and e) macrosystem. The first theme is divided into four categories: Family structure, custodial parent-child relationship, noncustodial parent-child relationship, and relationships with root family. The second theme is divided into three categories: The teacher-student relationship, the school counselor-student relationship and relationship with peers. The third theme is divided into two categories: The teacher-parent colloboration and school counselor-parent colloboration. The fourth theme is divided into three categories: Dynamics of education, law, and economic systems. The fifth theme is divided into two categories: The socioeconomic structure and the sociocultural structure. The table containing the themes, categories and sub-categories is presented below.

Table 3. Themes, categories and subcategories

Themes	Categories	Subcategories
Family microsystem	Family structure	a complex family with one or more root family members, a family with a step-parent, a single parent family.
	Custodial parent-child relationship	adjustment of the parents to the divorce process, parental attitudes, emotional difficulties experienced by the child, the effect of the other parent on the parent-child relationship
	Noncustodial parent-child relationship	quality of the pre-divorce relationship, the events witnessed during the divorce process, the rupture of the relationship, the failure to keep the promises made, the ambivalent feelings experienced by the child
	Relationships with root family	the parenting role played by root family members, the role of root family members on special occasions
School microsystem	The teacher-student relationship	problems with defying authority, problems with academic success, teachers' perception of children from divorced families, sensitiveness, self disclosure, teachers' efforts to support the children
	The school counselor-student relationship.	indirect interventions, problems working with teachers, direct interventions, school based family counseling
	Relationship with peers	positive observations about the relationships of peers with their parents, withdrawal, bullying, low tolerance for adversity, effects of children's role in the family on peer relationships, parents' attitudes about peer relationships, individual characteristics
Mesosystem	The teacher-parent colloboration	conflict between parents, parents' emotional adjustment to divorce, attitudes of the teacher
	The school counselor-parent colloboration	lack of regular participation of parents, parents' attitudes about seeking help
Exosystem	Dynamics of education	difficulty in finding and adapting psycho educational programs, finding suitable place for interventions, teacher education
	Dynamics of law	problems with joint custody, limited scope of mediation
	Dynamics of economic system	lack of financial support and employment opportunities economic crises, effects of pandemic on single parent families
Macrosystem	The socioeconomic structure	lack of financial support for single parent families, effects of pandemic
	The sociocultural structure	society's negative view of divorce, values placed on having family and children, difficulty of intervene family circumstances

Family Microsystem

There are four categories in the family microsystem: a) family structure, b) custodial parent-child relationship, c) noncustodial parent-child relationship and d) relationships with root family.

Family Structure. It was discovered that the children were raised in various family structures, including a) a complex family with one or more root family members, b) a family with a step-parent, and c) a single parent family. According to the interviews, different problems were encountered depending on the family structure. It is seen that complex family structures that include root family members are more common. This family structure provides benefits to parents such as providing care for the child, receiving economic support from the family when needed, and being able to devote personal time to him/herself. E1 explained this as follows:

> *''I can occasionally leave the kids with their grandmother to have some alone time. Thanks to my parents, my father was driving the kids to and from school while I was at work. With the economic support of my father, I took the kids to kindergarten.'' (E1)*

However, it has been observed that there may be problems in the family with roles, boundaries, and disciplining children. C7's teacher O3 stated that there were conflicts and border problems in the family, stating:*"It is a structure that has both ties to each other and can say very unethical things to each other"* in reference to the house arrangement in which the grandfather, uncle, father, and child live together. E4, on the other hand, stated that her own parents granted her child's every wish and spoiled her:

> *''She was a very spoiled child. It bothers me and I was trying to help her changing behaviour. But my mother has always been understanding towards her.''*

In this category, it has been observed that single-parent families, in particular, face greater economic and practical challenges. Economic factors such as the fact that women must return to work after divorce and work in unqualified/temporary jobs due to their educational status, the difficulty of finding a job during the pandemic, and the parents' health problems all increase anxiety.

> *''What happened to me, the entire burden was on my shoulders. In other words, it is extremely difficult to make a living, especially for children... I mean, if you are sufficient for one, you will be unable to keep up with the other, not only financially, but also spiritually.'' (E3)*

The negative impact of these difficulties on spending time with the child was the most frequently mentioned:

> *''Since I work and C3 is always at school, the time we spend together is limited and he often complains. He is often upset that I am not with him.'' (E2)*

Custodial Parent-Child Relationship. In this category, a) adjustment of the parents to the divorce process, b) parental attitudes, c) emotional difficulties experienced by the child, and d) the effect of the other parent on the parent-child relationship stand out as sub-categories. With separation/divorce, parents experience shock, confusion, and helplessness, and they feel worthless. During the separation/divorce process, parents used phrases like "I was devastated," "I fell into a void," "I thought I was crazy," and "I was stuck in the middle." It was stated that the emotions of the parents changed over time in terms of intensity and quality, but some parents continued to have psychological symptoms such as being unable to stay in one place for an extended period of time, sleep problems, and sudden mood swings.

> *''I mean, sometimes I can't stay in a place for too long, sometimes I can't go to bed, sometimes I wake up from my sleep.'' (E1)*

> *"Perhaps they are an expression of my experiences (during the divorce process); I am aware that that occasionally I react unexpectedly. My mood fluctuates a lot from time to time.'' (E2)*

Furthermore, almost all of the parents reported feeling exhausted and fatigued on a regular basis. In this context, parents mentioned family-specific difficulties such as having more than one child, caring for the child as the opposite-sex parent, having health problems of the child/parent, and the child's developmental stage.

> *"I am 35 years old, but believe me, I feel like I am 50." (E8, victim of violence, divorced 5 years ago, mother of four children)*

> *''I'm finding it extremely difficult because she is a girl. We talk and chat, but I am unable to learn anything about her problem because she won't tell me.'' (E6)*

The experiences of the parents are not only related to the divorce process, but also to the roles and responsibilities they assume in the marriage relationship:

''My life hasn't changed all that much. I was alone even though I was married. I go everywhere by myself.'' (E1)

It was also discovered that parents who were unable to establish a co-parenting relationship after divorce felt relatively more inadequate:

"There are times when I have difficulties, it would be a lie if I said that it does not happen. It is extremely difficult to transform into two people because you become both a mother and a father. This burden is extremely difficult to bear. Sometimes I go insane thinking that I am insufficient."(E1)

About half of the parents stated that they were in constant conflict with their ex-spouse. They were observed to have an avoidant or aggressive attitude during this process, and the parents' anger made the co-parenting relationship difficult. In her interview with E3, a 31-year-old secondary school graduate mother, P1 stated:

"I don't think she's been able to get through the divorce process emotionally. This is consistent with the information she has provided. I can see this very clearly in the mother's reactions because she speaks more angrily in matters such as the child's meeting with his father and the frequency of meeting with his father." (P1)

Some parents seem to have less difficulty managing their emotions and distinguishing between their own and their children's needs. E1, C1 and C2's mother, described the situation as follows:

"I always told him to come, I didn't separate him on such children's special days. Even after the first few months of our most recent separation - a month later - it was our children's birthday, and even on that birthday, although I was very angry, I only took a picture for my children in the same frame.'' (E1)

Related the first subcategory, short-term psychiatrist support and drug use, trying to forget by being caught up in the flow of daily life, benefiting from social support, and getting new jobs/occupations are among the coping methods used by parents in the process of adjustment to divorce.

"I enrolled in X University, because daily temporary works are difficult due to my illness. I was enrolled in three courses, for example. I was constantly studying." (E3)

It is remarkable that none of the parents were involved in the psychological counseling/psychotherapy process. E1 describes her frustration as follows:

''I know there are treatments available, but I'd rather cover it up and bury it. To be honest, I don't want to experience that over and over." (E1)

Although the majority of the parents stated that they received important support from their parents, relatives, friends, and even neighbors during the adjustment process; a few parents expressed negative changes in their social life as a result of the divorce:

''I usually stay at home and don't go out. I have a children that I have to look after. I do not have a life outside, I do not have a social life.'' (E6)

Related to this, some of the parents stated that they were hesitant to get help from their extended family because they were afraid of upsetting their parents. Some parents felt they were a burden to their parents, while others felt guilty towards their parents:

''Because you intend to shoot it out. I don't mean to shout that loudly. Even after the divorce, I lived alone. I tried to restrain myself so that my family would not be upset, and others would not be upset for my family.'' (E2)

Among the coping methods, surviving the process by holding on to the child has emerged as a very common pattern:

"I live for them, I try to do something for them, I have nothing else." (E8)

> *''I made an effort to calm down, hugged my child, and tried to move on by spending time with him and taking care of him. I attempted to forget (E7).''*

Some of these parents stated that 'they were very fond of their children'. In particular, as a reflection of this motivation, they have high expectations and concerns about the academic success of their children. It was found that they tried a variety of ways such as special courses and giving awards, to increase academic achievement:

> *''They expect academic success (in return for what they do). All that matters to her is her son's academic success. Oh, my son! I want him to do his homework, reading, and so on. However, she is not aware that the primary needs of the child are love, attention and respect at work, as well as the feeling and acceptance of his existence.'' (P1)*

Another pattern that appears in parents who overcome this process by clinging to their children is that they create an isolated life. As a result of this lifestyle, children experience separation anxiety from their mothers and cannot separate their feelings from their mothers:

> *''We were not exposed to any additional factors that would influence C3. I was present in C3's life, but he had school when I was not. Maybe he had a nursery for an hour before I got home from work. We always had that flow, so I was always there. That is why we went through the process that became so similar. ... All he wants is to be close to me, to see me at home. For example, if I'm 10-15 minutes late, he says, 'You're already late, mom,' and this has always been the case.'' (E2)*

> *''She is very attached to me. Whenever I am sad for some reason, she cries too.'' (E8)*

While some children are overprotected for divorce-related reasons, others are "neglected" for the same reasons. C7's teacher, O3, stated that *"Her needs are not met quickly, they are met late. Not because of lack, but because of neglect."*

It is also observed that parents' adjustment to the divorce process has an impact on their parenting attitudes. Parenting attitudes stands out as a distinct sub-category because they are not a dimension to be evaluated solely under parental adjustment to divorce. It has been observed that some parents do not set limits for their child, allow them to do whatever they want and try to compensate financially for the time they are unable to spend with their child due to long working hours. The majority of the parents, on the other hand, stated that they had an authoritarian attitude and struggled to demonstrate the appropriate attitude towards being a single parent:

> *''There is no father where discipline is required, where father's usually step in. So I join in as well. My behavior towards my children is ebbing and flowing at the moment. When I'm strict, I'm strict like a father, but I can't keep such a balance.'' (E1)*

It has been observed that parental attitudes can differ between children and cause problems. Regarding E1's attitude, the school counselor shared his observations about the children as follows:

> *''The second grade boy, who is more mature, has been given a heavy burden. C1 is more like the youngest child in the family and spoiled as if he is a younger brother. Because C2 is the man of the house and they both have different missions, which causes problems.''*

In addition, the difference between parents' attitudes/caregivers and its effect on the relationship with the child was expressed by the 30-year-old housewife mother E4 as follows:

> *''He takes the child to all kinds of entertainment; I always care about her lessons. I make her bored, I make her bored.''(E4).*

It is seen that the parents' individual adjustment process and parental attitudes, as well as the experiences of the children in the process, affect the parent-child relationship. According to the custodial parent, almost all of the children in the focus are afraid of losing their caregiver parents as a result of the divorce, and they express this verbally/nonverbally. Fear of loss manifests itself in a variety of behaviors, including avoiding upsetting and comforting the parent, worrying when the parent is sick, showing interest in the parent, and trying to protect the parent by not expressing their wishes and needs:

''She exclaimed, 'Look, no!' She stated that she did not wish to receive any gifts for her birthday. She advised me not to buy a gift or anything. She explained why. 'Let's be happy, you (her sister and mother) be happy, that's enough for me." (E3)

''When I'm ill or fall from somewhere, or have a headache, for instance. She comes right away and gives me medicine and massages'' (E4)

It has also been observed that some parents have an attitude that trigger this anxiety:

''I told the kids, 'Look, I come home, I iron your clothes, I make your breakfast every morning, I dress you, I make you do your homework, I take care of you, I give you a bath, we somehow have our dinner… So, maybe I shouldn't." (E1)

Aside from the fear of losing, parents mentioned their children's need for attention and the difficulties they encountered in meeting this need in various dimensions:

''For example, he does not normally ask me for help when making extra books, but he does want me to sit next to him. You are a working mother and you have a lot of responsibilities at home. So you won't be able to do that during the time he desires. But that is what he expects, and such things break him.'' (E2)

''She is always eager to spend time with me. This means going somewhere, doing something, eating, drinking, traveling, and playing games. Let's go to dinner together, play together, go to the park, do this together, and go shopping for me!'' (E4)

The majority of the parents interviewed stated that their children were "easily offended" and "easily angry." The reasons for anger include not fulfilling/postponing the child's wishes on time and the child's insistence on something. When the statements of the parents are examined, it is revealed that the emotional intensity of the child changes depending on the quality of the relationship established between the parent and the child as well as the individual characteristics of the children. E4, explained her child's feelings as follows*:*

"She gets angry easily with her friends, but calms down quickly; not against me, of course. Her resentment toward me lasts a long time.''

In contrast, E2, the mother who claims to have a happy and calm relationship with her child, described the situation as follows:

"He is frowning but it returns to normal after 2 minutes."

It is also seen that the attitudes and behaviors of the other parent can influence the child's feelings toward his parent. C6's mother, E4, described her child as follows:

"The child was hostile to us every time she went. She treats me as if I'm the enemy, not her mother.''

Noncustodial Parent-Child Relationship. It has been observed that the relationship between the noncustodial parent and the child has an impact on the child's adjustment to divorce. In this relationship, sub-categories such as the a) quality of the pre-divorce relationship, b) the events witnessed during the divorce process, c) the rupture of the relationship, d) the failure to keep the promises made, and e) the ambivalent feelings experienced by the child emerged.

However, when the effect of this relationship on adjustment was evaluated, it was discovered that custudial parents' own perspectives about this relationship should also be taken into consideration, since no interviews with the noncustodial parent were conducted. While some parents believe that their children are not affected by their refusal to make statements about their fathers; others may notice emotional fluctuations in their children on occasion.

''He didn't even know it (the divorce). We started living with his grandmother and uncle, and not much has changed. He is happy, he is not affected.''

''C1 became irritable, began to hurt his friends, had a disagreement with his teacher... My other son (C2) was always in his own world, but he was very angry.'' (E1)

Except for one parent, all parents stated that the parent-child relationship had been broken for periods ranging from two to three months to one and a half years. According to some parents, the child's relationship with the other parent is completely broken.

> *''They couldn't see each other for a year, a year and a half at first. Because I've been through a lot of adversity, partly because of my greed and partly because of his...'' (E1)*

On the other hand, this relationship may evolve over time:

> *''C3's father did not become a father to C3 until I got married for the second time. C3 felt the lack of it...He's there now (with his father), and it's enjoyable. They see each other every 15 days.'' (E2)*

Parents discussed the quality of the child's relationship with the noncustodial parent prior to the divorce and its impact on the child's adjustment:

> *''Because they were already very young, when their minds are clear, all they remember is that their father comes home late and is constantly working, you know. 'Mom, my dad never came home, he was working,' one of my children said.'' (E1)*

Various reactions of children to the change in their relationships with their noncustodial parents emerged from the interviews. Parents stated that their children blamed themselves, were uncomfortable with the words "mother" and "father," had crying fits or crying at night, were envious of children with fathers and their faces drooped in the presence of other fathers with children.

> *"One thing piqued my interest. We were learning to read and write, so we did dictation. When we first learned to write the word "dad," he told me, "Teacher, I don't have a father, I have an uncle." (O5)*

> *''She doesn't like hearing the word: mother." (O3)*

Aside from these reactions, it was noted that the children refused to meet with their fathers. It was discovered that the children's feelings of longing, love, hope, and anger were in conflict, making it difficult for them to cope with the ambivalent feelings they experienced. E3 shared a memory when the child missed and called the other parent, but got angry and hung up after the phone rang busy.

Most of the interviewed parents stated that they tried to involve the father in the process and to improve the father-child relationship by mediating. On the other hand, in some cases, the custodial parent may have an impact on the emotions experienced by the children:

> *''C9 has negative feelings toward the father, but the main reason is communication with the mother. He is more reliant on his mother, and he hasn't seen his father in years, so he has negative feelings. However, he will not be able to react in this manner if he sees his father.'' (P2)*

Also, the effects of the events witnessed and/or directly experienced by the children in the divorce process on the children's adjustment were come forward in the interviews. These events can be identified as one-time or ongoing negative interactions between the step-parent/parents' partner and the child, attendance at court, witnessing domestic violence, confiscation of belongings in the house, and living on the street.

> *''There was fighting, insults, alcohol, and everything else. We were able to divorce thanks to the children's testimony. (crying) We came here on our own and built a home. I don't regret getting divorced, but I'm sad because my children are exposed to it.'' (E8)*

> *''Because the children were exposed to very different situations, such as the presence of someone in their father's life, the child calling and someone else answering the phone... my child had no idea what swearing was, and for the first time (I heard), my child was swearing on the phone when that woman answered the phone.'' (E3)*

Apart from the negative events witnessed or directly experienced, the effect of the other parent's failure to keep promises on children has been observed:

> *''For example, he asked his father for a computer, but his father did not buy when he promised. The following day, he had a fever and became ill. He usually has a fever and gets sick. He makes account and feel sad.'' (E1)*

In the interviews, it was seen that the coping skills of the children differed but the pattern of not expressing their feelings to the other parent and reflecting them to others was prevalent:

> *''There was always a breaking point when you confronted the father, that is, there was nothing like questioning him, calling him to account, or reacting.'' (E2)*
>
> *''C1 became a little more irritable, tried to hurt his friends, stood up against his teacher; it was sometimes too much for me as well, and it made me very depressed. As if I am responsible for this seperation.'' (E1)*

In line with this, another common pattern is to ignore the other parent. It was revealed that the children questioned their existence because they did not feel the presence of the other parent in their lives. They sought the relationship they could not establish with the noncustodial parent, in the relationships they established with the custodial parent and other adults. In this context, the shares of O5, the teacher of C9 who has no communication with his father; and P1, C2's school counselor, can be evaluated:

> *''Something caught my attention. Now we are learning to read and write, so we dictate dad. When he first learned about it, he said: 'Teacher, I have no father, I have uncle.'' (O5)*
>
> *''Psychologically, the child requires a man's love and care. For example, my son is in C2's class. While I am playing games with my son, C2 is attentive. Because of me C2's favorite is my son and also C1 feels close to me as a result. I try not to turn him away, either.'' (P2)*

Relationship with Root Family. In the interviews, the direct and indirect effects of the family of origin on the child's adjustment to divorce were revealed. Since the indirect effect seen through the economic and practical support of the parent is discussed in the family structure category (see first theme), it will not be discussed again. In this category, the parenting role played by root family members when the parent is not physically and/or emotionally available and the role of root family members on special occasions will be discussed.

In cases where the custodial parent is physically or emotionally unavailable, there is a more direct interaction between the child and the grandparents, and these people can also play the parent role. E6, the 36-year-old father, who started a job away from home after the divorce process explain this situation as follows:

> *"She saw my mother as her mother, she was the one who was always interested in her, you know, she knew she was her grandmother, but she called her with the word of mother.'' (E6)*

According to the parents' interviews, the support of the root family and relatives played a significant role especially on 'special days'.

> *''We are sad during the holidays because our father is, to put it mildly, irresponsible. There is no such thing as visiting the children. For example, he hasn't seen them for two months. During the holidays, children become (upset), but I still try to entertain them. I'm not sure, I take them to a shopping mall… There are a few children from my relatives that they love very much, I take them to them. I'm trying to compensate for that lack.'' (E1)*

When the findings are examined, the feelings expressed by parents and children after divorce in the interviews overlap with the findings in the literature (Gross & Barrett, 2013; Pickhardt, 2011). On the other hand, the discovery that the negative effects of some unresolved emotions persist even after many years have passed over the critical 1-3-year period (Korkut, 2003) suggests that there may be sociocultural and economic phenomena in the way these emotions are experienced. This interpretation appears to be supported by frequent use of dysfunctional coping mechanisms and a desire to avoid or fail to benefit from professional mental health services. Furthermore, it has been observed that the relationships established with both parents following the divorce are influenced by the parents' adjustment, and interventions for establishing a co-parenting relationship are required, particularly for the parents to cope with the feelings of inadequacy. The influence of parents can be seen in the emergence and regulation of the child's ambivalent feelings as well as strong emotions such as fear of loss. In this context, parents are encouraged to redefine their post-divorce parenting roles and relationships with their children in order to adjust. Relationship arrangements, particularly in families with root family members or step-parents, should be made with great care. As a result, family environments in

various structures formed after divorce can be said to play a critical role in meeting the physical and emotional needs of the child, and this finding overlaps with the literature (Ahrons, 2004). However, it is seen once again that children are not only affected in this process, but also actors who give unique reactions and shape their relationships. In line with this, it is critical to expand mental health services to include divorced parents, children, and even grandparents.

School Microsystem

In the interviews, it was seen that the dynamics of the school environment may also be effective in the adjustment of children to divorce. These dynamics can be examined in three sub-categories as a) teacher-student relationship, b) relations with peers, c) school counselor-student relationship.

Teacher-Student Relationship. Almost all of the teachers interviewed described their interactions with their students as 'positive, good, and nice.' The questions asked to embody their relationships revealed that the children hugged their teachers, drew pictures of them, wanted to talk to them, and their relationships with teachers are similar to other students. On the other hand some teachers stated that some of the students in this group had problems with defying authority. Among the behaviors mentioned were refusing to complete writing assignments and leaving the exam paper blank:

> *''C4, let's write on the notebook, let's do it! So while I try to motivate her like this, the kid says: 'I'm not doing it'. (I asked) Why don't you do it? (She answers) I don't want it, I won't!'' (E3)*

Another issue raised by the teachers during the interviews was academic success. The students' academic achievement levels were stated to range from low to medium. A few of the teachers stated the following about the impact of family circumstances on academic success:

> *''He (E5) has difficulty in getting his child to do his homework because he works in shifts. He explained, 'I call my mother and tell her how to do it.' That's why he (C5) struggles in class. If someone is interested, he will be much more successful. Because her father works and her grandmother is elderly…'' (O1)*

Several teachers used the phrase *"I would not have guessed if I hadn't learned that the child's parents were divorced"* during the interviews. This circumstance was discovered to be related to teachers' perceptions of children from divorced families. It has been observed that teachers label the children of divorced families as " vicious, problematic and morally undeveloped:

> *''Children from divorced families, as far as I can tell, are a little more like this; they become vicious and naughty. But this girl is not at all like that; she is a very mature.'' (O2)*

According to the interviews, a significant portion of the children experienced the process "within themselves." In line with previous finding, there was a risk that teachers' perceptions of divorced children would render them 'invisible,' particularly those who experienced the process differently. Both school counselors and parents expressed this situation as follows:

> *''There are too many children with behavior problems in that class (C5's teacher's class). There are three or five of them, and she did not make such a request about C5.'' (P3)*

> *''I stated, 'Teacher, I mean, I'm having strange feelings in this' (child). I mean, I was wondering if something was wrong with her psychology. This girl... Do you not notice anything?'' (E3)*

On the other hand, it was discovered that a group of teachers did not consider their parents' divorce as a factor that could affect children and cause problem behaviors. Some of them were unaware that the children's parents were divorced.

> *''Teachers are not aware of the psychology of children. Even the best teacher did not do anything extra, perhaps he did not talk with them, can I tell you that? Even the best teacher learns that his/her parents are getting divorce through the risk maps we want.'' (P3)*

According to the teachers' statements, some of them were more sensitive to the impact of divorce on children. It has been observed that the teacher's individual experience is effective in the development of this sensitivity, and this sensitivity can also exist apart from the teacher's professional experience.

''I mean, I always talk about in class, I don't just say 'mom', I don't just say 'dad'. Sometimes, if the parents are working, the grandparents also take care of them, and I include them too. When I was online last year, C1… there was a picture of a girl and her father on screen. C1 was locked in there, he wasn't interested or anything. Then… I don't remember if he turned off the camera, he showed a reaction. You know, her mother was surprised, I said: 'Don't be surprised, you know, probably with this father… with a daughter and father…'' (O6)

''He's been irritated for two weeks. When I approached him (with his father), he said, "It's not like that at our house; I'll talk to his mother." When his father confronted her, she shared that he was also attempting to push his brother at her house, too. (O1)

The majority of the teachers interviewed stated that the children did not discuss family issues with them, shared only superficially, were hesitant to answer questions about their families, or did not give correct answers:

''He does not talk about his personal life, his mother or father, or his brother. He has nothing to say. For example, I have a little nephew. I go to him (C5) and share something about my nephew so that he can share with me. He doesn't say anything about.'' (O1)

Gender and changes over time related to self-disclosure are also mentioned in this context:

''When there is a problem, C11 can come and tell me, but not in the way that girls talk. Girls come and pour their hearts out, so they tell about everything, including family problems. It's fine, but they're more than just boys.'' (O6)

(Regarding her relationship with C7 following the death of her grandmother, who was like a parent to her)
''For example, when she doesn't come to school, I ask why. She thinks a lot about the question. You get the impression that she's hiding something, and I get the impression that she's not telling the truth.'' (O3)

The interviews revealed that the teachers' efforts to support the child were limited. A few teachers stated that they spoke with the school counselor about the child's and family's situation, others stated that they observed the child and chatted with the student during breaks, and still others stated that they invited/called the parents for an interview.

''When I ask O9 how many divorced students are in her class... When I mentioned there was a study, she mentioned C4... She stated that she believed the divorce had a negative impact on the child's social and emotional development. As a result, we can obtain assistance. But, once again, I've taken the first step.'' (P1)

''She speaks very well, and since we didn't meet last year, there were times when we talked for hours on the phone because of a pandemic... We are in constant communication.'' (O6)

Interviews with teachers revealed that they were experiencing a variety of difficulties in supporting the child. The high course load and the difficulty of getting involved in family-related issues were two of these difficulties:

''Since his parents are divorced, I want to take care of him more. But I don't have time anyway. The lesson last half an hour. 10 minutes of this is spent opening and checking students' notebooks and book pages. He also spends time with his friends during break.'' (O1)

''You can't get too deep into it because it's a bit of a complicated here. As a teacher, how much can you get into people's private lives?... Actually, I guessed some things, but it is very difficult to get involved and fix them because there are wounds and problems all over the family.'' (O3)

According to the findings, providing the necessary socioemotional support to the child may be negatively impacted by socially based shared negative perceptions of divorced families and children of divorced families as well as by limited knowledge about how divorce affects children. Consistent with the findings, some studies shows that teachers' opinions regarding divorce and children of divorced families are vary and emphasized that the importance of teachers' awareness of children of divorced families and hey have varied opinions regarding divorce and children of divorced families (Veinberg, 2015). While it is understandable that differences in self-disclosure and asking for help in the relationships that children establish with their teachers

are caused by gender, time, and various individual characteristics of children, it is important that teachers take the necessary steps to establish a trust-based relationship that is not only academically focused, but also allows them to express themselves.

Relationships with Peers. According to the results of the interviews, more than half of the children have problems with their peer relationships. These problems include hitting, pushing, snoring, getting into verbal fights, and being bullied by their peers. It has been observed that problems with peers are related to some family dynamics.

> *"Children are acutely aware of their father's absence. I also know they are upset, I know they wanted to cry but couldn't, and I know my son became very angry at school (to his friends) as a result of this..." (E1)*

Positive comments about their parents, whether made consciously or unconsciously in the relationship between children and peers, as well as positive observations about the relationships of peers with their parents, have been shown to have an effect on children's peer behaviors:

> *''This period (violence) returns, that is, it does not end; it repeats. Children see fathers because they see them in school. I've heard that fathers occasionally come to pick up their children from school. I'm not sure. Some kids say, 'I did this with my father over the weekend.' In schools... I believe it occurs frequently at our school. Children are very cruel; they say things to children that will upset them.'' (E1)*

In the interviews, it is seen that most children have a low tolerance for adversities and mistakes that are shown to them by their peers, even if they are not directed at them. According to interviews with parents, teachers, and school counselors, some children have a rigid attitude towards their peers, and in some cases, even their teachers.

> *''Mom, for example, 'When someone does something wrong, I just snap back,' she says.'' (E3)*
>
> *''When he is angry, he returns home immediately and is easily irritated by his friends.'' (E4)*

According to the interviews, children's behaviors in their interactions with their peers are also influenced by their parents' attitudes and the child's role in the family:

> *''When the child arrived at school, he was extremely happy. He (C9) was overjoyed to go to school because they had isolated themselves at home. He is a good student who does not cause any problems in class. He adores and respects his classmates and teacher.'' (P2)*
>
> *(describing her reaction when her child has a disagreement with one of her peers as follows) "Don't come and tell me about the negative thing you experienced with your friend; if you're going to be offended, don't play with anyone, sit here." (E4)*
>
> *"You will call me big brother, I am older than you," he tells his friends. He is attempting to replicate the experience at school. He is an act of extreme defense against C1; if something happens, a few people go there, and he may be involved. Maybe C1's thing (problem behaviors) is a role that he's given himself as a result of C2's maturity." (P2)*

It can be seen that some of the child's individual characteristics are also brought to the fore when establishing relationships with their peers. These characteristics are leadership, the ability to express their wants and needs, the ability to find creative solutions, and assertiveness.

> *''A very popular boy, a boy that other boys want. He's quite active, so they always ask me, 'Is C1 in your class?' He's a very popular kid.'' (O6)*

The findings are consistent with previous findings that children can reflect family patterns to the school environment and that their individual characteristics can protect them during the process (Emery & Forehand, 1996; Turkarslan, 2007). With starting school, children can position themselves by comparing themselves and their parents to their peers and other adults in school settings. This situation can be especially difficult for the children of divorced parents, and if the proper approach is not taken, it can lead to them having negative perceptions of themselves and others. While being able to interact positively with peers is an important skill for this developmental period, it is also thought to be important to make various interventions to support these skills, particularly in supporting the development of children from divorced families.

School Counselor-Student Relationship. In interviews with school counselors, it was discovered that children were mostly supported indirectly. Interventions included interviewing parents and caregivers, interviewing teachers, and referring. In some cases, it was stated that it is possible to work directly with children who were referred to the counseling service. When the reasons for being referred to guidance service were examined, reasons such as absenteeism, showing less interest in the lesson, difficulties with homework/studying, and displaying an aggressive attitude in peer relationships were discovered. When working with children on these issues, school counselors stated that they make observations and use behavior charts. They stated that they addressed the issue directly with the students and intervened in the problem behavior by assisting them in developing positive behaviors.

> *''For example, when the weather is good, I try to go outside and play ball with them just to have something to do. It feels great for him, and they are overjoyed. In this regard, I have the opportunity to observe both in the classroom and in the game setting.'' (P2)*

Some school counselors, on the other hand, have stated that they would rather work on the underlying causes of the problem than the problem behavior and they will use a more systematic and comprehensive helping process that includes a variety of strategies:

> *''If we discuss the work I will do with Q4, we will move the process forward on two legs. The first focuses on academic abilities. Following that, we will investigate where the child is in terms of social and emotional development. What is she experiencing and how is she developing her coping skills during the divorce process? We will also focus on individual interviews here... I intend to employ various approaches and methods, such as the drawing analysis technique and play therapy.'' (P1)*

Some of the school counselors addressed their interactions with teachers and parents while working with children from divorced families. The second one is will be discussed under the mesosystem. Among the issues encountered with the first subcategory are teacher's emphasis on problem behavior and academic success, not being sensitive to the child's psychological state, not applying the suggestions made, and not supporting the guidance and psychological counseling activities:

> *''Even if the child is academically unsuccessful, if he exhibits problematic behavior, the teacher sees it as a problem... For example, C6's mother reported that her grades had dropped, but the teacher believes there is no problem because there is no problem behavior in the classroom.'' (P3)*

> *''For example, if this child is excluded from the classroom because he is a neglected child, the teacher's role is critical for this child to be accepted by his peers in the classroom. At this point, the teacher can reshape the classroom groups, bring him together with the popular students in the class, assign important duties and responsibilities in the classroom, and highlight the things he can do to increase the child's self-confidence. However, they also hesitate to put it into action.'' (P1)*

In light of the school level and the developmental level of children, school counselors mostly make indirect interventions. To be able to support the child in this context, it is necessary to collaborate with parents and teachers through scheduled consultation meetings and seminars to build working relationships and help them develop knowledge and skills. On the other hand, the limited interventions implemented within the school system suggest that child-focused and school-based family counseling and guidance services should be developed and strengthened. Existing literature suggest that working on issues such as developing peer relationships, increasing academic success, and emotion regulation can have a protective effect in assisting with divorce adjustment (Masten & Reed, 2002). In line with research findings, various individual (e.g play therapy) and group interventions made in the school setting help improve children to adjust divorce (Rose, 2009; Sentürk Aydın, 2013).

Mesosystem

The mesosystem is divided into two categories as: a) teacher-parent collaboration and b) school counselor-parent collaboration.

Teacher-Parent Collaboration. In the interviews, the majority of the teachers stated that they were able to work with custodial parents who take care of their children and make an effort for them. It is important to note that nearly all of the teachers stated that they only knew the custodial parent. In some cases, the teacher appears to be caught in the middle of a conflict between the parents.

> *''The father is constantly calling the school to inquire about the status of his son. He contacts the teacher and the school principal. (He says) When I come, I'd like to meet the child. Because the mother does not want her child to see him, we are powerless to intervene.'' (P1)*

It has been observed in some cases that the parents' adjustment to divorce influences this colloboration. While C4's teacher O7, complained that the mother was always trying to reach her and could give inconsistent answers in the interview with the counselor, C3's teacher O3 stated the following about her colloboration with E6:

> *''I'm speaking with the father; I don't know exactly how I set up the collaboration because he says okay to everything I say: I do it, I handle it. This is frequently stated. But it has no effect; it is not an appeal response. He's doing something, he believes everything I say, he claims it's true, he claims his reasons, whatever they are. But no result.''*

As mentioned before, the attitude of the teacher, as well as the situation of the parents, are also effect this colloboration. C4's parent described her conversation with the teacher as follows:

> *"But this year, our teacher, she was convinced and said that C4 will not be able to improve in any way..."* *(E3)*

Counselor-Parent Collaboration. The striking pattern in relationships between school counselors and parents is that they occur at the counselor's request and when a 'problem' arises. The interviews between the counselor and the parents are mostly 'child-oriented,' and the parents do not want psychological support for themselves. It seems remarkable that a few parents and teachers wanted to get support through this research and that they made their first appointment with a school counselor after the interview.

Although school counselors stated that they made progress by working with the child, they also stated that certain circumstances made the process difficult. The school counselors emphasized the effect of not being able to include the noncustodial parent in the process, in addition to the difficulty experienced in the regular participation of the custodial parent:

> *''It would be far more beneficial if we could include the father, as well as the entire family, in the process. He needs a father, someone to hold his hand, stroke his hair, and spend time with him.'' (P2)*
>
> *''Most parents have an understanding that: you talk to the child, you do something, you change the child, after the meeting success must have increase, children must have gain the ability to study, and the child's desire must have come. They come expecting very specific, very pill, or very magic wand solutions.'' (P1)*

According to school counselor (P1), some parents even prevent their children from seeking professional help.

> *''When I begin talking to the child without even requesting an interview- because I have identified a student or been referred by the teacher- the parent may ask, 'Why are you taking my child?' and may say, 'I don't want you to meet with my child.' I'm in a situation where I get a lot of reactions like this.'' (P1)*

The attitudes of teachers' and school counselors' towards divorced families/children, as well as the adjustment of the parents, have an impact on the teacher-parent and school counselor-parent relationships. Establishing a problem and child-centered interaction, as well as lack of active and regular parental participation in the process have a negative impact on colloboration and holistic intervention. As a result, the child's adjustment to divorce is influenced by the interaction of the family and the school systems.

Exosystem

The dynamics of education, economy, and legal system, which are associated with the child's adjustment to divorce, are discussed in three categories at this level.

System of Education. During the interviews, school counselors stated that they were unable to find a suitable place where confidentiality could be assured while working with children from divorced families, and that they

were having difficulty finding and adapting psycho-educational programs appropriate for the children's characteristics. However, during the pandemic period, there were deficiencies in the execution of child-focused family psychological counseling, which resulted in an inability to provide sufficient information about the situations of children and families, and thus an inability to provide adequate care. The statements of the school counselors reveal the educational dynamics that influence children's adjustment to divorce:

> *''I was working with a student body that was predominantly inclusive... I'm having difficulty adapting the existing program there because there are issues with the child's mental state... basically, what I need is a program appropriate for the level and place.'' (P1)*
>
> *''I spoke with him (C4) after a long time; after the pandemic period.'' (P3)*

One of the risk factors associated with this system in the context of the adjustment of children from divorced families is the education process of teachers. The findings from previous chapters on teacher-student, teacher-parent, and teacher-school counselor relationships revealed that most teachers are insensitive to how and through which mechanisms children are affected by the divorce process. Although the individual factors relating to this situation are explained, it is believed that systemic inferences such as teacher training can also be made. Education is regarded as one of the most important tools in developing sensitivity and awareness on various issues.

The Legal System. According to the findings of the interviews, 80% of the parents who took custody were mothers (see Table 1), and this finding appears to be consistent with the country's divorce statistics (TUIK, 2022). In the interviews most parents stated that they did not receive alimony for a variety of reasons. Furthermore, noncustodial parents withdraw their financial and emotional support and relinquish their parenting roles. E3, mother of two, expressed this as follows:

> *''What happened to me, the entire burden was on my shoulders. In other words, it is extremely difficult to make a living, especially for children... I don't just mean financially, but also emotionally. After all, if you're enough for one, you won't be able to keep up with the other.''*

When the literature is examined, it is thought that the failure to follow the joint custody procedure, the limited scope of mediation, and its inadequacy in increasing psychological adjustment in terms of quality can be considered risk factors.

The Economic System. According to interviews, single parents often worked long shifts and temporary jobs during the divorce process. Some parents worked multiple jobs to make ends meet, and the pandemic reduced their employment opportunities. Increasing economic stress forces parents and children to live with their root family and exposing them to a variety of adversities. It has been revealed that in exchange for the support they receive in child care, parents who live with their families take on the task of providing economic livelihood for the families, and the burden has increased. E4 stated that she moved to his mother's house during the divorce process and worked very hard because she was the only one who made a living in the house. She went on to say that she couldn't care for her child because she was exhausted, and that it was a time when her mother was responsible for almost all of her child.

Although the practical and relational difficulties caused by economic difficulties in the lives of the child and the parent were explained in the previous section, it is seen that this situation is also related to systemic dynamics. Only one of the parents interviewed stated that she received bread aid from the municipality as well as monthly financial support from the social security agency because she was unable to work due to health issues. In this context, it is assumed that divorced parents should be supported within the framework of the system in order to improve the quality of life for themselves and their children.

Macrosystem

Society's Economic Structure. Although divorce reduces family income, large-scale phenomena such as economic crises and unemployment rates exacerbate the disadvantaged position of single-parent families.

However, the conditions caused by economic conditions are critical because they pose a variety of risks to the parent, child, and parent-child relationship as mentioned before.

Society's Sociocultural Structure. In terms of adjustment, the values adopted in collectivist cultures, as well as the importance placed on the family and the child, have both risk-increasing and protective effects. During the interviews, it was discovered that some teachers and school counselors shared the society's negative view of divorce. Furthermore, from sociocultural perspective, the information obtained about children's peer relationships can be reveal that children continue to share this point of view that exists in society.

> *''Even after the divorce, I lived alone. I tried to restrain myself so that my family would not be upset, and others would not be upset for my family.'' (E2)*

Another prominent aspect in relation to is, almost all of the parents interviewed stated that they received support from their families in various dimensions, including economic, social, emotional, and practical support, and some parents expressed this as 'their family takes care of them.' Relevant quotations will not be repeated because they have already been covered in previous sections. In this context, it is possible to assert that the social value placed on family ties and children has a protective effect in some cases.

On the other hand, it was discovered that parents prioritized their children's needs over their own, that the majority of their concerns were about their children, and that they even lived for their children. Although this situation appears to be beneficial for children at first glance, it appears to be ineffective in practice. Even when there is a risk of harming people, sayings like "don't get involved in the husband and wife argument" demonstrate that "family privacy" is valued in society. It is risky not to intervene when parent-child adjustment should be supported, especially in light of the domestic violence phenomenon that often accompanies divorce cases. One of the teachers' statements clarified this social value and approach:

> *''As a teacher, how far can you go into people's private lives?... Actually, there are some things that I guessed, but getting into it and fixing it is extremely difficult.'' (O3)*

Results

When the findings obtained from the five themes were examined, it was discovered that the parents' adjustment to divorce affected their parenting attitudes and skills, as well as their relationship with their child, and that the new family structures formed after the divorce had different strengths and difficulties. However, children are not only affected by this process; it has been observed that individual and developmental characteristics, as well as individual experiences, influence their adjustment. Second, according to the research, the phenomenon of adjustment to divorce, should not be handled only within the family system; it reveals that the attitudes and behaviors of actors such as teachers, peers, and school counselors influence the process by interacting with other systems. Furthermore, wider applications such as teacher education, employment opportunities, mediation and joint custody, and the indirect effects of society's economic and social structure are factors that should be considered in terms of children's adjustment to divorce. As a result, supporting children's adjustment to divorce requires a holistic approach and organized interventions at various levels.

Limitations

The research's study group consists of custodial parents, classroom teachers, and school counselors of children from divorced families aged 6 to 11. The research findings are restricted to the information obtained from the study group participants. A limitation of the study is that no children or noncustodial parents were interviewed directly. This limitation is due to the researcher's lack of experience working with children for potentially traumatic life events, as well as the difficulty in contacting the noncustodial parent.

Suggestions

Based on the research findings, the recommendations made to researchers, practitioners and legislators in the field are as follows:

1. Because this study is limited to 10 parents, eight teachers, and three school counselors, interviews with different participants (for example, the divorced family child, his/her root family, his friends, his parent who

does not have custody) at different education levels can be conducted to examine the adaptation levels of primary school children to divorce.

2. Experimental research can be conducted in which interventions such as psychoeducation and group counseling in order to improve children's adjustment to divorce are designed, implemented, and evaluated. These practices can also be designed for noncustodial parents, grandparents, or teachers.

3. Alternative approaches and methods, such as the use of online processes in child-oriented family counseling, interactive practices to increase teacher and parent cooperation, and consultation can be included.

4. It may be useful to raise and broaden the scope of practices such as joint custody and mediation, as well as economic empowerment of disadvantaged families.

5. Arrangements can be made to improve access to mental health services for divorced parents, children, and other family members living together.

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