

## **Effects of Divorce on Parenting, Psyche and Behaviour of Some Selected Public Senior High School Students in the Bolgatanga Municipality of Ghana**

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**Abstract:** *The study adopted the descriptive survey design to investigate the effect of divorce on parenting, psyche and behaviour of affected students. Hundred students, 10 parents and 10 school counsellors were used in the study. The study was guided by two research questions. It was revealed that divorce negatively affect parenting, psyche and emotional behaviour of affected students. Respondents gave recommendations to reduce cases of divorce. It was recommended that school counsellors identify students from divorced families and counsel them against the development of negative tendencies on their (students) part.*

**Keywords:** *effects, divorce, parenting, psyche, behaviour, students.*

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The issue of divorce is an increasing social problem that has become a topic for discussion in recent times. It is traumatic for those who experience it. Those affected may experience grief, embarrassment, resentment, disappointment, intense anger and divided loyalty. Amato and Keith (1991), after a systematic analysis on the effect of divorce on children, concluded that parental divorce is associated with negative outcome in academic achievement, conduct, psychological adjustment, self-esteem and social relations. No matter how wealthy either of the divorced parents might be, the children are likely to miss that parental love, care and devotion which are essential elements in their proper upbringing. This deficiency may haunt them in their various fields of endeavour in life including education. Children, therefore will most probably lack the basic physical and psychological needs which are the prerequisites of good life.

### **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1. Divorce and Psychological (Emotional) and Behavioural Development of Children**

According to Aseltine (1996), parental divorce is associated with substantial short term elevations in a children's emotional distress. The longer that this distress remains problematic after the separation, the greater the likelihood of adolescent depression. More than twice as many adolescents from divorced families have seen mental health professionals compared to children from two parent families (Hines, 1997). Children of divorced parents are disadvantaged in a variety of way compared to children who grow up with both parents including being less likely to perform well in school, more likely to exhibit behavioural problems and more likely to have social and psychological difficulties (Hanson, 1999). Compared with children from two-parent families children with divorced parents are more likely to drop out of high school, less likely to attend college, and complete fewer years of education (Amato & Sobolewski, 2001). Many believe that this is due to the emotional disturbance that is caused in disrupted and chaotic households and child's potential to form a poor sense of self.

A study of second and third graders from divorced families indicated that they were more likely to have general school adjustment issues (Hoyt et al., 1990). Research showed that serious problems related to the effects of divorce can persist into adulthood. Researchers have found a 39% increase in the incidences of mental health problems in children of divorce home/families as compared to their peers from two-parent families at age 23 (Chase-Lansdale, Cherlin & Kieman, 1995) and an 85% increase at age 33 (Rodgers, Power & Hope, 1997). Children of divorce homes/families present an increased risk for internalizing problem, including higher levels of depression, anxiety, and compromise self-esteem (Bynum & Durm, 1996).

Parental divorce doubles the risk of children demonstrating externalizing behavioural problems (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Compared to 10% to 15% of children in non-divorced families, studies revealed that 17% to 25% of children in divorced and remarried families demonstrate clinically significant internalizing and externalizing behavior problems (Amato & Keith, 1991). The largest reported effects are indicated in externalizing behaviours such as conduct disorders, antisocial behaviours and problems with authority figures (Kelly & Emery, 2003). Compared to children in non-divorced households, preadolescent children in divorced and remarried families show increased levels of aggression, non-compliance, disobedience, inappropriate classroom conduct, and decreased self-regulation (Hetherington & Elmore, 2003).

Parent-child relationships have been proven to be largely affected by divorce both with custodial and non-custodial parents. One of the central concerns about parenting after divorce is violations of boundaries that may occur including; drawing children into marital disputes, shifts in power between the parent and the child and sense of equality of child may gain from the parent, leaving developmental needs to be a “child” unmet (Arditti, 1999). Children are therefore perceived as a spouse or a best friend to the custodial parent. The quantity and quality of time with the non-custodial parent, usually the father, tend to decrease with time (Amato & Booth, 1996). In turn, the relationship with children and their custodial parent, frequently mothers, shows an increase in tension over time (Amato & Booth, 1996). This tension includes an increase in behaviour problems and sexual promiscuity due to lack of supervision and the need children have to feel “loved”. Adolescents in mother-only households and in conflict ridden families are more likely to demonstrate antisocial tendencies and commit delinquent act (Hines, 1997). Moreover, most custodial parents are in the labour force. This places a constraint on the time and energy they can devote to their children, resulting in a decrease in parental supervision and an increase in the likelihood of problems with academic achievement, low self-esteem and premarital pregnancy (Amato, 1993).

### **3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Empirical data published over the last several decades in leading sociological journals indicate that children of divorced parents suffer significant educational and emotional disadvantages compared to children reared by their married parents. The boys are more likely to engage in criminal behavior and the girls to have non-marital children. Social dynamics such as divorce work against a child growth and development. The researchers are, therefore, motivated to ask the question: How does divorce affect the parenting, psyche and behaviour of affected school children? It is against this backdrop that this research sought to determine the effects of divorce on parenting, psyche and behaviour of Senior Secondary Schools (SHS) students.

### **4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The study sought to:

- Find out the effects of divorce on child care (parenting) as well as psychological (behavioural) development of students.
- Identify measures to mitigate divorce and its effects on school children.

### **5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. How does divorce affect child care (parenting), psyche and behavior of the affected students?
2. What should be done to mitigate divorce and its effects on school children?

## **6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The study would be significant for the following reasons:

- The study will create a clear picture in the minds of various stakeholders in education of the effects of divorce on parenting, psyche and behaviour of affected students.
- Both Ghana Education Service (G.E.S.) and the various religious bodies could adopt the findings to promote effective guidance and counselling and marriage counselling services in their educational institutions and churches.
- The study would serve as a source of information for teachers, guidance and counseling coordinators, parents, social workers and non-governmental organizations.
- Finally, it may also form the basis upon which further studies could be conducted to find out the influence of dual parenting on students.

## **7. METHODOLOGY**

### **7.1. Research Design**

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. Descriptive research involves collecting data in order to test hypothesis or answer research questions concerning the correct status of the subject of study (Gay, 1992). The descriptive survey is directed towards determining the nature of a situation, as it exists at the time of the study.

### **7.2. Population**

The estimated population of the study from which samples were selected included 300 SHS students whose parents were divorced, 30 divorced fathers or mothers and 10 school counsellors within the Bolgatanga Municipality.

### **7.3. Sample Size and Sampling Techniques**

A combination of simple random, convenience and purposive sampling methods was used in selecting a total sample size of 120 study participants. This consisted of 100 students from divorced parents, 10 divorced parents and 10 school counsellors. The students were given questionnaire while the parents and the school counsellors were interviewed. According to Gay and Diehl (1992), generally the number of respondents acceptable for a study depends upon the type of research involved that is, being carried out. They indicated that for a descriptive research, the sample size should be 10% of the population or 20% if the population is small. The choice of the 120 study participants was also based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) assertion that at least 10% of a study population gives a proportional representation.

The 10 school counsellors were purposively sampled for the study while the 10 divorced parents were conveniently sampled. Face to face interviews were held with the 10 divorced parents and the 10 school counsellors from the participating SHSs. The 100 SHS students were randomly selected via the use of table of random numbers.

### **7.4. Instruments for Data Collection**

A structured questionnaire and semi-structured interview schedule were used to gather information from students, counsellors and parents. The student questionnaire had items. Each item was followed by a five point Likert Scale: *SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree and I = Indifferent*. Students were requested to respond to the statements by choosing the most appropriate response from the Likert Scale. A semi-structured interview schedule was also employed to gather qualitative data from counsellors and parents to verify students' responses. Specifically, the face-to-face interview was adopted.

### **7.5. Validity and Reliability of Instruments**

The test re- test method was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire and the interview guide. The questionnaire was administered to some students from divorced homes in Bongo SHS. Similarly, the interview schedule was also administered to the school counsellor and a divorced parent in Bongo. After two weeks, the same set of questionnaire and interview schedule was administered to

the same group of students, the school counsellor and the parent. This yielded similar responses. Again, the quantitative data from the piloted questionnaire were subjected to the Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis to assess the reliability of the instrument. The reliability coefficient of .700 which was obtained was deemed relatively high. These indicated that the instruments were reliable and could be used for the study.

**7.6. Data Collection Procedure**

The questionnaires were personally distributed or administered to the students by the researchers. The return rate for the questionnaire was 100%. The interviews were conducted in their respective homes and schools on scheduled date and time.

**7.7. Data Presentation and Analysis**

All the information from the questionnaire was entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 16.0. It was used to generate descriptive statistics. The interpretation of the descriptive statistics made it possible to make appropriate inferences in terms of their effects on students' academic performance.

With regard to the analysis of the semi-structured interview data, the qualitative data was used to clarify the quantitative responses. Specifically, direct quotations were used to support or clarify the quantitative data when necessary. Serial numbers were assigned to the interview transcripts so as to attribute statements to the parents and the school counsellors. The interview transcripts for the parents were assigned numbers *Parent 1-10* while those of the school counsellors were assigned *School Counsellor 1-10*.

**8. RESULTS**

Research Question 1: How does divorce affect child care (parenting) of the affected students?

To find answer to this research question, responses to items (questions) 1-13 in the questionnaire as well as questions 1, 2a and 2b in the interview schedule were analyzed.

**Table1.** *The Effects of Divorce on Child Care (Parenting) of Affected Students in the Bolgatanga Municipality (N = 100)*

| Statement   |             | Response |      |      |      |      | Total      |
|---|-------------|----------|------|------|------|------|------------|
|   |             | SA       | A    | D    | SD   | I    |            |
| Divorced father/mother adequately Provides my basic needs.                    | <b>Freq</b> | 12       | 14   | 38   | 30   | 6    | <b>100</b> |
|   | <b>%</b>    | 12.0     | 14.0 | 38.0 | 30.0 | 6.0  | <b>100</b> |
| Divorced father/mother adequately Provides my school needs.                   | <b>Freq</b> | 6        | 14   | 45   | 26   | 9    | <b>100</b> |
|   | <b>%</b>    | 6.0      | 14.0 | 45.0 | 26.0 | 9.0  | <b>100</b> |
| Divorced father/mother adequately Pays for my school fees/levies.             | <b>Freq</b> | 21       | 19   | 41   | 15   | 4    | <b>100</b> |
|   | <b>%</b>    | 21.0     | 19.0 | 41.0 | 15.0 | 4.0  | <b>100</b> |
| Divorced father/mother counsels/ Advises me at home.                          | <b>Freq</b> | 17       | 17   | 31   | 28   | 7    | <b>100</b> |
|   | <b>%</b>    | 17.0     | 17.0 | 31.0 | 28.0 | 7.0  | <b>100</b> |
| Divorced father/mother monitors & Supervises me at home.                      | <b>Freq</b> | 15       | 15   | 51   | 13   | 6    | <b>100</b> |
|   | <b>%</b>    | 15.0     | 15.0 | 51.0 | 13.0 | 6.0  | <b>100</b> |
| Divorced father/mother engages me in Excessive household work/child labour.   | <b>Freq</b> | 19       | 45   | 14   | 14   | 8    | <b>100</b> |
|   | <b>%</b>    | 19.0     | 45.0 | 14.0 | 14.0 | 8.0  | <b>100</b> |
| Divorced father/mother encourages or motivates me to learn, o                 | <b>Freq</b> | 20       | 23   | 43   | 7    | 7    | <b>100</b> |
|   | <b>%</b>    | 20.0     | 23.0 | 43.0 | 7.0  | 7.0  | <b>100</b> |
| Divorced father/mother participates In PTA & other school activities.         | <b>Freq</b> | 19       | 27   | 26   | 20   | 8    | <b>100</b> |
|   | <b>%</b>    | 19.0     | 27.0 | 26.0 | 20.0 | 8.0  | <b>100</b> |
| Divorced father/mother interacts With my teachers.                            | <b>Freq</b> | 6        | 26   | 33   | 25   | 10   | <b>100</b> |
|   | <b>%</b>    | 6.0      | 26.0 | 33.0 | 25.0 | 10.0 | <b>100</b> |
| Divorced father/mother visits me At school.                                   | <b>Freq</b> | 7        | 20   | 31   | 30   | 12   | <b>100</b> |
|   | <b>%</b>    | 7.0      | 20.0 | 31.0 | 30.0 | 12.0 | <b>100</b> |
| Divorced father/mother gives me Much attention & satisfaction.                | <b>Freq</b> | 10       | 30   | 29   | 25   | 6    | <b>100</b> |
|   | <b>%</b>    | 10.0     | 30.0 | 29.0 | 25.0 | 6.0  | <b>100</b> |
| I have access to my divorced Father/mother.                                   | <b>Freq</b> | 16       | 26   | 30   | 19   | 9    | <b>100</b> |
|   | <b>%</b>    | 16.0     | 26.0 | 30.0 | 19.0 | 9.0  | <b>100</b> |
| I'm comfortable & happy with the Present custody (family living/arrangement). | <b>Freq</b> | 9        | 26   | 34   | 26   | 5    | <b>100</b> |
|   | <b>%</b>    | 9.0      | 26.0 | 34.0 | 26.0 | 5.0  | <b>100</b> |

Source: *Field Survey, 2015.*

SA - Strongly Agree; A - Agree; D - Disagree; SD - Strongly Disagree; I - Indifferent

From table 1, 12 (12.0%) SHS students strongly agreed while 14 (14.0%) of them believed that, either their divorced fathers or mothers adequately provided for their basic needs (food, clothing, shelter and education). Conversely, 38 (38.0%) of the students disagreed, 30 (30.0%) of them strongly disagreed to this statement while 6 (6.0%) of them were indifferent. Also, 6 (6.0%) of the students strongly agreed while 14 (14.0%) of them corroborated that, either their divorced fathers or mothers adequately provided for their school needs. In contrast, 45 (45.0%) of the students refuted while 26 (26.0%) of them strongly disagreed to the statement. Nine (9.0%) students were irresolute. Twenty-one (21.0%) of the students strongly affirmed while 19 (19.0%) of them concurred that, either their divorced fathers or mothers adequately paid their school fees or levies. However, 41 (41.0%) of the students disagreed and 15 (15.0%) of them strongly disagreed to the statement that divorced father/mother adequately paid for their school fees or levies. Only 4 (4.0%) students were undecided.

The table above shows that 17 (17.0%) students strongly confirmed and 17 (17.0%) of them agreed that divorced father or mother counselled or advised them at home. Conversely, 31 (31.0%) students disclaimed, 28 (28.0%) of them strongly disagreed to the statement while 7 (7.0%) of them were in doubt. Fifteen (15.0%) students strongly agreed and 15 (15.0%) of them agreed that divorced father or mother monitored and supervised them at home.

Moreover, the data in table 1 points out that 51 (51.0%) students disagreed, 13 (13.0%) of them strongly disagreed to this claim while 6 (6.0%) of them were indifferent. Nineteen (19.0%) students whose parents divorced strongly agreed while 45 (45.0%) of them admitted that divorced father or mother always engaged them in excessive household work or labour. Fourteen (14.0%) of them disagreed, 14 (14.0%) of them strongly opposed this assertion while 8 (8.0%) of them were indecisive.

Twenty (20.0%) students strongly agreed while 23 (23.0%) of them consented that, divorced fathers or mothers encouraged/motivated them to learn. In contrast, 43 (43.0%) students disclaimed and 7 (7.0%) of them strongly disagreed to the statement. Seven (7.0%) students were indifferent.

Furthermore, the data in table 1 shows that 19 (19.0%) student victims of divorce strongly agreed and 27 (27.0%) of them asserted that, their divorced fathers or mothers attended and participated in PTA as well as other school activities. However, 26 (26.0%) of the students disagreed, 20 (20.0%) of them strongly disagreed to this statement while 8 (8.0%) of them were not sure. Six (6.0%) students strongly admitted while 26 (26.0%) of them concurred that their divorced fathers or mothers interacted with their teachers. Conversely, 33 (33.0%) of the students disagreed, 25 (35.0%) of them strongly disagreed to this assertion while 10 (10.0%) of them were indifferent. Seven (7.0%) students strongly agreed while 20 (20.0%) of them agreed that their divorced fathers or mothers visited them at school. On the other hand, 31 (31.0%) students disagreed, 30 (30.0%) of them strongly disagreed to the statement and 12 (12.0%) of them were irresolute.

Table 1 further shows that 10 (10.0%) students strongly consented while 30 (30.0%) of them agreed to the statement that, they got much attention from their divorced fathers or mothers. Conversely, 29 (29.0%) students disagreed, 25 (25.0%) of them strongly refuted this claim and 6 (6.0%) of them were uncertain.

Table 1 also points out that 16 (16.0%) student victims of divorce strongly admitted while, 30 (6.6%) of them affirmed that they had access to their "absentee" fathers or mothers. In contrast, 30 (30.0%) students denied, 19 (19.0%) of them strongly disagreed to the statement while 9 (9.0%) of them were undecided. Nine (9.0%) students strongly admitted while 26 (26.0%) of them agreed that, they were comfortable and happy with the present family or custody arrangement. However, 34 (34.0%) students declined and 26 (26.0%) of them strongly disagreed. Only 5 (5.0%) students were indifferent.

During the interview, the interviewees were asked to talk about the experiences of children who were living in divorced homes. Their responses suggested that the children had some problems and therefore needed support. Some of the interviewees commented:

The school counsellor commented: "*Hmm, some girls whose parents had divorced engage in pre-marital sex. It is very difficult controlling my children. So, they need good parental care and parenting.*" (School Counsellor 4)

Another school counsellor indicated, "*Many of the affected children come to school on empty stomach, so they need appropriate support.*" (School Counsellor 2)

The survey established that, parental care was relatively poor with gross deprivation of social and economic needs of the students. The quality as well as quantity of supply of basic and educational needs to meet the demands of school children is predictive of their academic performance. The evidence is that, majority (68.0%) of the children pointed out that divorced parents did not adequately provide basic needs including food, clothing) for their children. It was also found that, 64 (64.0%) divorced parents engaged their wards in child labour. It was also evident from the result that, 58 (58.0%) children of divorced parents did not have access to the "absentee" parent. More so, 60 (60.0%) children of the divorced parents lamented that they did not get much attention and satisfaction from either the divorcee or divorcee. Thus, 65 (65.0%) children of the divorced parents were not comfortable and happy with their living or custody arrangements.

Items in the questionnaire (14-20) elicited responses on the effect of divorce on the psyche and behaviour of students. The relevant data is presented in table 2 below:

**Table2.** *The Effects of Divorce on the Psyche & Behaviour of Affected Students in the Bolgatanga Municipality (N = 100)*

| Statement   |             | Response |      |      |      |     | Total      |
|---|-------------|----------|------|------|------|-----|------------|
|   |             | SA       | A    | D    | SD   | I   |            |
| I am angry with my divorced parents.                | <b>Freq</b> | 31       | 30   | 15   | 18   | 6   | <b>100</b> |
|   | %           | 31.0     | 30.0 | 15.0 | 18.1 | 6.0 | <b>100</b> |
| The condition or situation of living in a           | <b>Freq</b> | 41       | 28   | 10   | 14   | 7   | <b>100</b> |
| Divorced family affects my psyche & emotions.       | %           | 41.0     | 28.0 | 10.0 | 14.0 | 7.0 | <b>100</b> |
| I think I play truant at home/school because I live | <b>Freq</b> | 35       | 21   | 14   | 30   | 0   | <b>100</b> |
| In divorced family.                                 | %           | 35.0     | 21.0 | 14.0 | 30.0 | 0.0 | <b>100</b> |
| Living in a divorced family makes me to happily     | <b>Freq</b> | 21       | 20   | 26   | 27   | 6   | <b>100</b> |
| Socialize with peers.                               | %           | 21.0     | 20.0 | 26.0 | 27.0 | 6.0 | <b>100</b> |
| Living in a divorced family makes me to             | <b>Freq</b> | 30       | 27   | 18   | 17   | 8   | <b>100</b> |
| Withdraw or isolate from peers.                     | %           | 30.0     | 27.0 | 18.0 | 17.0 | 8.0 | <b>100</b> |
| Living in a divorced family makes me to show        | <b>Freq</b> | 25       | 29   | 21   | 18   | 7   | <b>100</b> |
| Aggressiveness.                                     | %           | 25.0     | 29.0 | 21.0 | 18.0 | 7.0 | <b>100</b> |
| Peer pressure badly affects me because I live in    | <b>Freq</b> | 31       | 25   | 15   | 21   | 8   | <b>100</b> |
| A divorced family.                                  | %           | 31.0     | 25.0 | 15.0 | 21.0 | 8.0 | <b>100</b> |

**Source:** *Field Survey, 2015.*

SA - Strongly Agree; A - Agree; D - Disagree; SD - Strongly Disagree; I - Indifferent

Table 2 shows that, 31 (31.0%) students strongly agreed while 30 (30.0%) of them agreed to the statement that, they got angry with their divorced parents. In contrast, 15(15.0%) students disagreed, 18 (18.0%) of them strongly disagreed to this statement while 6 (6.0%) of them were indifferent. Also, 41 (41.0%) students strongly agreed while 28 (28.0%) of them consented to the statement that, living in a divorced family affected their psyche and emotions. However, 10 (10.0%) students denied, 14 (14.0%) of them strongly disagreed to the statement while 7 (7.0%) of them were undecided. Moreover, 35(35.0%) students strongly affirmed while 21 (21.0%) of them concurred that they played truant at home and school because they lived in divorced families. Conversely, 14 (24.0%) students disagreed and 30 (8.0%) of them strongly disagreed to the statement.

Again, 21 (21.0%) students strongly confirmed while 20 (20.0%) of them agreed that living in divorced families made them to happily socialize with peers. On the other hand, 26 (26.0%) students disclaimed, 27 (10.0%) of them strongly disagreed to the statement while 6 (6.0%) of them were not sure. Further to that, 30 (30.0%) students strongly agreed and 27 (27.0%) of them agreed that, living in divorced families made them to withdraw or isolate from peers. However, 18 (18.0%) students disagreed, 17 (17.0%) of them strongly disagreed to this claim and 8 (8.0%) of them were irresolute.

Twenty-five (25.0%) students strongly agreed while 29 (29.0%) of them admitted that, living in divorced families made them to show aggressiveness. Twenty-one (21.0%) students disagreed, 18 (18.0%) of them strongly opposed this assertion while 7 (7.0%) of them were doubtful. Thirty-one (31.0%) students strongly agreed while 25 (25.0%) of them consented that, peer pressure badly affected them because they lived in divorced families. In contrast, 15 (15.0%) students disclaimed, 21 (21.0%) of them strongly disagreed to this statement and 8 (8.0%) of them were indifferent.

**Effects of Divorce on Parenting, Psyche and Behaviour of Some Selected Public Senior High School Students in the Bolgatanga Municipality of Ghana**

In response to the questions, "How does the condition of living with a divorced parent affect the psyche, emotions and behaviour of children at home/school? Or what are the negative and/or positive experiences of children in divorced families?" Some of the interviewees expressed the following opinions or sentiments:

*"She is angry with me and won't like to listen to my side of the story. In fact, she is always quiet, reserved and unhappy. She is sad and will not take part in most activities at home. She is a truant, aggressive and a bully. She has low self-esteem. She lacks self-confidence. She does not want to mingle with friends. However, she is ready to associate with anybody who gives her attention and care."* (Parent 4)

*"Children from divorced parents go through trauma. They always feel sad and neglected. They are temperamental and disrespectful. Most of them are aggressive. They are always bitter, sad and unable to forgive others. They avoid companionship. They are not active in school and some of them are stubborn in school. They always absent themselves from school. They do not come to school very often. You see them selling on the streets. Yet, I must admit that some of these children are obedient, humble and respectful."* (School Counsellor 7)

The study revealed that divorce affected the psyche, emotions and behaviours of 69.0 % of SHS students in the Bolgatanga Metropolis. The assumption is that when parents separate or divorce, children often lose both the psychological (emotional) and financial support, which can directly have a negative impact on the psychosocial and intellectual development of the child.

Research Question 2: What should be done to mitigate divorce and its effects on school children?

To find answer to this research question, responses to item 21-24 in the questionnaire as well as question 5 & 6 in the interview schedule were analyzed.

**Table3.** Students' Opinions on Measures to Mitigate Divorce and its Effects on School Children (N = 100)

| Statement of Opinion                               |             | Response |      |      |      |      | Total      |
|--|-------------|----------|------|------|------|------|------------|
|  |             | SA       | A    | D    | SD   | I    |            |
| The laws of Ghana should permit reunion            | <b>Freq</b> | 43       | 37   | 10   | 5    | 5    | <b>100</b> |
| After short period of divorce.                     | %           | 43.0     | 37.0 | 10.0 | 5.0  | 5.0  | <b>100</b> |
| Marital separation or divorce should be            | <b>Freq</b> | 27       | 35   | 13   | 15   | 10   | <b>100</b> |
| Regulated.   | %           | 27.0     | 35.0 | 13.0 | 15.0 | 10.0 | <b>100</b> |
| NGOs should offer scholarship/financial support    | <b>Freq</b> | 64       | 36   | 0    | 0    | 0    | <b>100</b> |
| To needy children from divorced families.          | %           | 64.0     | 36.0 | 0.0  | 0.0  | 0.0  | <b>100</b> |
| Philanthropists should offer care & social support | <b>Freq</b> | 53       | 47   | 0    | 0    | 0    | <b>100</b> |
| Services to children from divorced families.       | %           | 53.0     | 47.0 | 0.0  | 0.0  | 0.0  | <b>100</b> |

**Source:** Field Survey, 2015.

SA - Strongly Agree; A - Agree; D - Disagree; SD - Strongly Disagree; I - Indifferent

Table 3 shows that, 43 (43.0%) students strongly agreed while 37 (36.0%) of them agreed to the statement that, 'laws of Ghana should permit reunion after short period of divorce.' In contrast, 10 (10.0%) students disagreed, 5 (5.0%) of them strongly disagreed to this statement while 5 (5.0%) of them were indifferent. Also, 27 (27.0%) students strongly agreed while 35 (35.0%) of them consented to the statement that, marital separation or divorce should be regulated. However, 13 (13.0%) students denied, 15(35.0%) of them strongly disagreed to the statement while 10 (10.0%) of them were irresolute. In all, 80 (80.0%) students opined that the laws of Ghana should permit reunion after short period of divorce. Hence, 62 (62.0%) students objected to marital separation or divorce. Again, 64 (64.0%) students strongly agreed while 36 (36.0%) of them affirmed that, NGOs should offer scholarship and financial support to children from divorced families. Similarly, 53 (53.0%) students strongly agreed while 47 (47.0%) of them admitted that, philanthropists should offer care and social support services to children from divorced families.

The interview data indicated the following responses to the question, "In your opinion, what should be done to mitigate divorce and its impact on school children?"

*"Both parents and the affected children should be counselled and helped to prepare their minds as well as adjust to the situation. More education should be given on marital challenges or problems and the effects of divorce."* (School Counsellor 2)

*"Church leaders and important personalities should help mould the affected children and support their education. I also think the divorced parents must communicate. Again, our socialization process should emphasize on how to care for our partners and the needs of our children."  
“(Parent 1)*

## **9. DISCUSSIONS**

The observations from data in table 1 substantiates Shittu's (2004) view that, where a student suffers parental and material deprivation and care due to divorce or death or absconding of one of the parents, the student's schooling may be affected as the mother or father alone may be financially challenged to pay the school fees, purchase learning materials and uniforms, such students may play truant, thus their performance in school may be affected negatively. Alhassan (2000) contended that the family is responsible for the physical and material care as well as moral education of the young. Reasonably, there is a direct link between parental advice, educational guidance and homework supervision and academic achievement of children. The difference is that the quality and frequency of supervision of children's homework is associated not only with enhancement in learning, but more importantly with academic achievement. Other studies by Kutuadu and Marfo (2001) posited that, "negligence of parents to cater for their wards in school is a very bad practice which further leads to a number of adverse effects on the society. Brandt (1994) realized that parent-child interaction is very important for the development of the child

The finding from table 2 confirms Belsky, Steinberg and Draper's (1991) observation that exposure to negative emotionality in early life evidently reduces trust, and commitment, in future relationships, particularly intimate ones, like close friendships and marriage. Relatively, greater emotional negativity and psychological stress accompany divorced families. The finding supports Hart and Risley's (1995) observation that poverty is accompanied by greater emotional negativity in the home, making children vulnerable to antisocial behaviour, mental illness and so on. If poverty is psychologically stressful (Lupien, King, Meaney & McEwen, 2001), then one would predict that it would evoke emotional negativity during childhood, thereby increasing subsequent emotional commitment problems, so that people reared in divorced families would be more likely to have adverse psyche-related problems.

## **10. CONCLUSIONS**

The following conclusions were drawn from this study:

- Greater emotional negativity and psychological stress accompany divorced families. Living in a divorce family is a useful predictor of individual differences in psychological emotional commitment problems.
- Adolescents in divorced families are more likely to demonstrate antisocial tendencies and commit delinquent acts. Anti-social behaviour and poor academic records of adolescents is usually associated with living in divorced families.
- Children growing up with a single parent, particularly a divorced parent suffer from various psychological difficulties caused by negative attitudes from school and peer groups.

## **11. RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are put forward:

- Public education should be carried to sensitize people in the area on the menace of divorce.
- Counsellors, psychologists, social workers and teachers should identify students from divorced families, especially those with academic achievement and behavioural problems, and assist them to cope with the emotional (psychological) and economic stress as well as negative tendencies.
- Extended family members, churches and other benevolent societies, individual philanthropists should provide a substantial degree of psychological care and moral support as well as financial assistance (money, scholarship schemes) toward single parent families who are economically disadvantaged.



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