

“Determinants of Divorce and its effects on Children’s Wellbeing in East Wollega Zone of Western Oromia, Ethiopia”

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Abstract

Globally around 5 million children are living on street due to divorce. In Ethiopia around 4,042,357 children are living under difficult condition because of families' inability to support their children because of family dissolution (Woldekidan, 2007). This study investigates determinants of divorce and its effects on children’s wellbeing in Eastern Wollega Zone of Western Oromia, Ethiopia. Descriptive research design with mixed research approach was employed. Data was collected through questionnaire, interview and focus group discussion from divorced individuals. One hundred fifty-eight (158) divorcees individuals from five districts were randomly selected by simple random techniques from each district. Eight (8) interviews and three (3) focus group discussion were conducted with divorced individuals and zonal high court officer on the factors related to divorce and children wellbeing.

Study found that ,peoples in marriage at young age have the higher probability of divorce at the first five years than people at marriage who marry during their older ages. Major socio-cultural factors contributed to divorce in the study area which include age difference between couples, interference from family, repeated conflicts, substance abuse and lack of appropriate communication, the socio-economic status of spouses insignificantly affects the wellbeing of their family, sexual relationship related factors were rated as a major factor leading to divorce. Children from divorced households are significantly depressed, exposed to financial crises and divorce diminishes children’s learning capacity

Keywords: Divorce; children; effects; marriage stability.

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I. Introduction

Divorce is a common phenomenon in today’s family, but still represents a major life stressor for the individuals married, with potentially strong and negative consequences for the social and family hood security (Amato and Previt, 2003). The causes and effects of divorce on the family has been the subject of researches for several decades, and has long been viewed as the cause of a range of serious and enduring emotional problems in children and adolescents.

Ethiopia is a country where marriage is seen as one of the basic social streams for having a happy familial life through performing socially accepted type of marriage. Nevertheless, as the period goes on, globalization and modernization has affected the value the society gives for marital life. Researcher study and said divorce is the result of several factors. Thus, the divorcing couples as well as the entire family experience a variety of abrupt changes which impact nearly every aspect of their lives. Divorce is most often an extremely painful series of events. Divorce is a serious experience that affect the whole family system particularly its impact on children is critical. Specifically, children whose parents divorced are being at a great risk for psychological and social adjustment than from intact families. Children of a divorced family are exposed for various problems and risks and those children of divorcee are more likely to be engaged in promiscuous, violence, crimes other related anti-social and criminal activities (Fagan, 2012).

According to East Wollega zone high courts recent report (2019), in the years between 2017 and 2019 there were about 728 marriage related cases which came in an increasing trend from year to year and majority of these cases were ended in divorce. Thus, this study shows there is a vast number of a population in divorce. In the zone as far as the researcher knowledge concerned there is no adequate research conducted related to divorce. The trend about the actual divorce rate at regional or national level, according (Tilson& Larsen, 2000) also agreed with this idea that “45% of first marriages in Ethiopia end divorce within 30 years, and two-thirds of women 7 who divorce within the first 5 years of marriage” were affected this problem . (Indrias, 2006) show

that the 600,000 number of children were living on street because of divorce problem.

The comparison of children between married and divorced families in relation to psychological condition, social relationship and child parents’ relationship indicated that children from divorced families have lower score of social and child parent relationships. Also, children from divorced families deprived of love, care and support of their non-custodial parent and it’s affecting the health growth and functioning of psychology and social life.

II. Materials and Methods

1. Study Area

East Wollega Zone has 17 districts and 288 rural villages. It is bounded to the southwest by Iluababor, to the West by the Didessa river which demarcates it from West Wollega, to the Northwest and North by the Benishangul Gumuz regional state, to the northeast by Horo-Guduru Wollega Zone, to the east by West Shewa zone, and to the southeast by the Gibe river which separates it from Jimma zone.

2. Research Design

The study employed a descriptive study design with mixture of qualitative and quantitative research approach. Study attempted to utilize concurrent mixed research design which involves mixing qualitative and quantitative data within the stages of the research process.

3. Study population and sample size

Participants of the study were children whose parents were divorced and divorcees parents and furthermore, Social Affair office staff and Court Office staff of five selected districts of East Wollega zone were also included in the study as key informants. One hundred fifty-eight (158) divorcees individuals from five districts were randomly selected by simple random techniques from each district.

Table I: Number of Divorce Case by Year (2009-2011E.C)

N ^o	Name of districts	Number of Divorced Individuals		
		Male	Female	Total
1	Gida Ayana	87	73	159
2	Bonaya Boshee	80	50	130
3	Jima Arjo	59	65	124
4	Diga	95	78	183
5	Sibu Sire	82	59	132
6	Total	403	325	728

Source: *East Wollega zone, High court 2020*

The study has applied a simplified formula provided by Yamane (1967) in order to determine the sample size at 95% confidence level, 0.05 degree of variability and as the issue is highly behavioral and respondents were approached purposively then the researcher intended to minimize the sample size through level of precision 7%.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N} (e)^2$$

$$n = \frac{728}{1 + 728} (0.7)^2 = 158$$

n=158

The quantitative data collected through close-ended questionnaires was analyzed through descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage and mean so as to describe the data collected in research studies and to accurately characterize the variation under observation within a specific sample.

Data was collected through questionnaire, interview and focus group discussion data from divorced individuals. Questionnaire based on background, socioeconomic, effects of divorce on children wellbeing and divorced with total of 55 items was prepared and distributed to the respondents. The structured questionnaire was designed with close ended and open-ended questionnaire to formulate their answers in their own words to collect information on socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the respondents. Close ended items were

helped the researcher to analyze easily and it was helped respondents to understand and respond their views easily.

Semi-structured interview schedule was conducted with two law officers and two women and children affairs and four divorced individuals. The rationale was that it has the advantage of flexibility for participants to give their opinion and provides the opportunity to express their feelings, perceptions, problems and intentions related to the issue under investigation.

III. Results

From the Table II, out of the total of 158 participants, the majority of respondents 58.17% were females. The male respondents were relatively low in number constituting out of 41.83%. Thus, as being identified throughout the literature review female with children are the most victimized of the divorced population. So that, approaching female than male was believed to bring out relevant data and information on the causes and socio-economic costs of divorce taking place on the ground.

Table II: Socio demographic Characteristics of the study population

Variables	Characteristics	Male		Female		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	Percent
Age Category (in year)	< 30	15	8.90	33	19.86	48	28.77
	31- 35	25	16.44	25	16.44	50	30.14
	36-40	13	8.21	15	10.27	28	19.20
	41-45	9	6.16	9	6.16	18	12.33
	46-50	2	1.30	5	3.42	7	4.79
	>50 years	4	2.74	3	2.05	7	4.79
	<i>Total</i>		68	41.69	90	58.31	158
Religion	Orthodox	17	9.58	18	10.27	35	19.86
	Muslims	33	23.97	41	27.40	74	51.37
	Protestant	12	4.11	24	15.75	36	19.86
	Catholic	4	2.74	7	4.79	11	7.53
	Wakefata	2	1.30	-	-	-	-
	<i>Total</i>		68	41.7	90	58.3	158
Level of Education	Cannot read and write	5	2.74	2	1.30	6	4.11
	Read and write	7	4.11	8	4.79	15	8.90
	Primary Education	10	5.55	7	3.42	17	8.90
	Secondary Education	13	8.21	10	6.85	22	15.06
	College/TVET	21	13.69	55	38.36	76	52.05
	BA/BSc	12	7.53	5	3.42	16	11.00
	<i>Total</i>		68	41.83	90	58.17	158

Source: Survey Method, March 2020

Regarding the age structure, 28.77% (8.90% males and 19.86 females) of the respondents was less than 30 years old. The larger number of divorced respondents age lies between 31-40 years making 49.34% of the total sample and of which 22.59% are males and 26.75% are females.

The rest respondents with age structure between 41-45- and 46-50-years accounts 12 % and 4.79% respectively and of which 22.59% are males and 26.75% are females. The rest respondents with age structure between 41-45- and 46-50-years accounts 12 % and 4.79% respectively.

1. Age at First Marriage, Sex and Time span of spouse before divorce

Table below illustrates that majority of female respondents, 26.72% were married at the age of 16-20 years; of which 13.70% females were stayed married for only 1-5 years and also significant numbers of females 19.86% were married at the age category of 21-25 years. The result further indicates that, the people in marriage at

young age have the higher probability rate of divorce at the first five years than the people at marriage who marry during their older ages. Relatively, males were married at the older ages than females. Thus, majority of male respondents (14.38%) were married at the age of 26-30 years and 15.75% were married at the age of above 30 years.

Table III. Distribution of respondents’ Age at First Marriage, Sex and Time Span of Spouse before Divorce

Age of Spouse at First Marriage	Sex	How long have you been stayed with your spouse before your divorce								Total	
		1-5 years		6-10 years		11-15 years		Above 16		f	%
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Less than 15 years	Male	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Female	2	1.30	2	1.30	-	-	1	0.68	5	3.28
16-20 years	Male	2	1.30	3	2.05	2	1.30	-	-	7	4.79
	Female	24	13.70	10	6.85	6	54.11	5	3.42	45	26.72
21-25	Male	3	2.05	2	1.56	-	-	5	3.72	10	7.44
	Female	12	7.53	8	5.55	9	6.16	--	-	29	19.27
26-30	Male	5	3.42	12	8.21	2	1.30	2	1.30	21	14.38
	Female	5	3.42	2	1.30	3	2.05	-	-	10	6.85
Above 30 years	Male	10	6.85	8	5.55	5	3.42	-	-	23	15.75
	Female	3	2.05	-	-	-	--	-	-	3	2.05
Total	Male	25	13.69	27	17.22	9	6.16	7	4.79	68	41.83
	Female	46	28.08	22	15.06	18	12.33	6	4.11	90	58.17

Source: Survey Method, March 2020

2. Socio-cultural factors as Determinants of Divorce

Table IV illustrates respondents view on socio-cultural factors as determinants of divorce. Here the commonly believed causes of divorce by numerous researchers are incorporated and asked to respondents to measure their attitudes whether they agreed or disagreed on these stated issues in the questionnaire in order to investigate the common causes of divorce which are disrupting and putting people in to divorce. Thus, the researcher has come up with the results from the respondents.

Respondents have showed their strong disagreement towards early marriage with mean value 1.91. Even though, marriage is takes place below 18 years most respondents perceive that early marriage was not taken as typical cause for divorce in the study area. As far as the relationship between socio-cultural variables and current marital status concerned, five variables found significant in predicting the response variable.

Thus, among others, respondents have showed their strong agreement to wards socio-cultural factors as major causes of divorce are age difference between couples (mean=4.05), interference from family, relatives or friends (mean=4.80), repeated misunderstandings and conflicts (mean=3.84) substance abuse (3.74) and lack of appropriate communication (not discussing, talking in improper way) (mean=3.86).

Table IV. Socio-cultural factors as Determinants of divorce and children wellbeing

N ^o	Causes of divorce	N	Mean	SD
1	Early marriage (<18 years old)	158	1.91	1.12
2	Age difference between couples (age disparity)	158	4.05	.98
3	Interference from outside (family, relatives or friends)	158	4.80	0.23
4	Repeated misunderstandings and conflicts	158	3.84	1.12
5	Substance abuse (physical/mental/emotional)	158	3.74	1.63
6	Difference in the social status (ethnicity, culture, family background) of spouses	158	2.65	1.61
7	Barrenness (Childlessness, sterility)	158	1.53	.69
8	Alcohol addiction/ drug usage	158	1.94	1.09
9	Lack of communication (not discussing, talking in improper way)	158	3.86	1.39

10	Lack of commitment to the marriage	158	1.63	.59
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Source: Own survey method,2020

3. Effects of Divorce on Children’s well-being

There already is extensive research on divorce’s direct effects on children. Parental divorce is a potentially tragic life event causing disruption and upheaval in children’s lives. Parental divorce is believed to, on average, cause a range of behavioral and emotional problems in children and adolescents (Kelly & Emery, 2003). This can be partially attributed to the fact that the end of marriage is associated with negative outcomes in the quality of children’s household environment as a result of changes in the ways that children and parents interact with each other.

Table V: Distribution of Respondents’ view on Effect of Divorce on Children’s well being

N ^o	Causes of divorce	N	Mean	SD
1	Stress/depression	158	4.68	2.18
2	Feelings of loneliness, inferiority and frustration	158	4.45	1.95
3	Loss of social value (dignity and respect)	158	4.67	2.17
4	Divorce leads to changing of residence (social isolation)	158	3.88	1.38
5	Divorce affects the relationship with friends	158	3.66	1.16
6	Parents’ divorce affects the social life of their children	158	3.65	1.15
7	Children are morally affected from their parent divorce (moral loss)	158	4.05	1.55
8	Children can face financial crisis	158	4.09	1.59
9	Declining living standard/drop of income	158	4.11	1.61
10	diminishes children’s learning capacity	158	4.18	1.68
11	Capital fragmentation (division of the capital of spouses)	158	3.55	1.05
12	Loss of education hours in schools	158	3.89	1.39

Source: Survey result,2020

As indicated in the above table V, majority of respondents perceive that, children from divorced households are significantly depressed and anxious (mean=4.68), feels loneliness, inferiority and frustration (mean=4.45), loses social life (4.67), affects the relationship with friends (3.66) exposed to financial crises (4.09), and divorce diminishes children’s learning capacity (mean=4.18).

IV. Conclusion

The family is the building block of society, and marriage is its foundation. Hence, marriage is a social institution that unites people in a special form of mutual dependence for the purpose of founding and maintaining a family. Divorce, on the other hand is a legislatively created, judicially administered process that legally terminates a marriage no longer considered viable by one or both of the spouses and that permits both to remarry. Divorce has pervasive weakening effects on children and on all of the five major institutions of society; the family, the church, the school, the marketplace, and government itself. However, this foundation is growing weaker as fewer adults marry, more adults divorce, and more adults choose single parenthood Society’s major institutions (family, church, school, marketplace and government) all have a great interest in reducing divorce to almost zero, for it weakens each institution by weakening the human capacities of each laborer, citizen, worshiper, and student that it touches.

Parental divorce appears to lower the well-being of children. When parents’ divorce each other, another sort of divorce occurs between the parents and their children. The primary effect of divorce is a decline in the relationship between parent and child. Children in divorced families receive less emotional support, financial assistance and practical help from their parents.

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