

The Relation between the divorce experience and the social participation of children aged 15-18 years

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Abstract

This study investigates the direct and indirect relations between divorce and social participation among children aged 15-18 at Arab-Israeli societies. The researcher used both the quantitative and qualitative approaches. For the collection of quantitative data, a questionnaire was distributed to 265 male and female Arab students aged 15-18 in Israel. As for the qualitative data, interviews were carried out with 54 participants, including students, parents, educational counselors, social workers, and psychotherapists. The questionnaire results showed that children whose parents remained married have better social skills than children from divorced families. Regarding the general results of interviewing 54 participants, most of them agree that children of divorced parents usually live in a state of anxiety, and feeling of inferiority. These feelings usually decrease their performance at school. Finally, the results stress the important relations between experiencing divorce, and children's social skills.

Key words: Divorce, Children of divorced families, children of married families, Social Participation, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

Date of Submission: 02-06-2022

Date of Acceptance: 15-06-2022

I. Introduction

Divorce is a social problem as Chang et al. (2003) state that society considers divorce as a high-risk and unplanned event occurring despite initial unwillingness. It happens without a timetable, or symbolic and social celebrations that legitimize it. Divorce brings different and conflicting feelings, accompanied with confusion and loss. However, it is a life transition maintaining and correcting family system and changing its re-growth. Moreover, divorce creates a new family framework resulted from conflict. Yet the family will be more positive and optimistic. It has many reasons, including marital boredom, ease to change, finding alternatives, financial problems, pleasure-seeking, selfishness, moral weakness, adultery, and other reasons.

Recently, divorce has begun to extend to Arab societies in general and Arab-Israeli society in particular. Living and interacting with Jewish community brings a western character which contradicts with our customs and traditions. According to Israeli Statistics Department (2019), the number of divorced couples in Israel has reached 15605 Jewish couples in 2018, and 3541 Arab couples. Although the divorce rate in the Arab society is still lower than that in the Jewish community, the Arab community has witnessed a significant increase in recent decades. The divorce rate in the Arab sector was 9% in the previous two decades decade (Israeli Statistics Department, 2019).

This study aims to determine direct and indirect relationships between divorce and school drop-out. Consequently, it is important to work hard to find out solutions to reduce negative effects of divorce on children who are ultimately an integral part of the society.

Research Questions

How does divorce experience affect social participation of children aged 15-18 years?

Research Hypotheses

Divorce affects children's social participation.

II. Literature Review

Divorce involves a series of transformations and stages for adults and children. These stages are similar to those described for people experiencing loss: denial, anger, bargaining, and depression. Actually, the negative problems and effects of divorce on children outweigh parents' suffering in many cases. They suffer from

anxiety, depression, psychological conflicts, anti-social behaviors, and various kinds of abuse which are a waste of human energy for children. Additionally, they face difficulties in psychological and social adjustment and a lack of social skills (Amato and Keith, 1991).

Social Participation

Social participation refers to the organized process in which individuals are distinguished by several characteristics, such as specific, collective, conscious, and voluntary actions. These characteristics usually lead to self-actualization and goal achievement. During the last 20 years, researchers have become increasingly interested in social participation concept. Moreover, several researches have considered developing and sustaining social participation as a vital needed goal for all ages.

Social participation aims to achieve community service in terms of making individuals an effective component of society, participants in social process, and complements to the social role assigned to them (Gottman and Parkhurst, 2014).

The real definition of social participation with reference to children of divorced families is the integration of family and friends' social network, community they live in, and the whole society while taking into consideration children's socialization and engagement in recreational, cultural, spiritual, and educational activities. Regarding the social network, it refers to the social interactions and personal relationships. These are essential components for individual's well-being. Actually, shared interests, sympathies, and living circumstances are the things that link people with their families, friends, and community. In addition, less cordial networks can be formed by people encountering each other through different activities and life situations. Moreover, establishing social relations and communications with others is very necessary for the development of children's social life.

Effects of Divorce on Social participation

Children of divorced parents are in a worse situation than children who live with married parents, as the former face more problems with their peers and cause more trouble for their parents (Amato, 2001). Children of divorced women usually achieve low academic progress, face educational problems, have poor social interactions, and suffer from trauma. They are victims of negative stereotypical perceptions of divorce and divorced parents (Ibrahim, 2003).

Kalmijn (2005) explained that divorce greatly affected children, with the effects appearing on females more than males. Females' psychological state was found worse than those males, as they became more introverted, sensitive, and unwilling to interact with the society. Some children blamed themselves after their parents' divorce, and some of them showed aggressiveness, depression, withdrawal from the society, and poor motivation to leave the house and interact with others (Amato and Keith, 1991).

The results of many studies, such as Kalmijn and Monden (2004), Sandell and Plutzer (2005), Syse et al. (2010), and Roeper and Bennett (2015) confirmed that divorce caused behavioral problems for the child, such as aggressiveness, anger, social isolation, anxiety, and physical disturbances. Children from divorced fathers feel that they are different from and even inferior to their peers from married fathers. Feelings of guilt resulting from divorce, shame over family disputes, and aggression at home reinforce feelings of difference (Blomquist, 1985). Shulman et al. (2012) emphasized that children who came from divorced families had a high rate of anti-social problems, especially drug abuse and sexual and aggressive behavior.

Children's transfer between their divorced parents' homes may lead to changing schools, interrupting communication with friends, spending more time in childcare places during the mother's work, which may cause psychological and behavioral disturbances that affect children's social skills and their willingness to participate in social activities (Emery, 1999; Haurin, 1992). In addition, children from divorced fathers flee more from participating in social activities than children from married fathers (Amato, 2000; Rahal, 2013). They also express violent behavior, hatred, and community rejection (Van Dolen et al., 2013).

All these problems have a continuous effect on children, which leads to the creation of a weak generation full of problems, and this is certainly against the interests of community growth and progress (Haimi and Lerner, 2016).

III. Research Methodology

Research Approach

The researcher made use of the inductive approach in the development of the hypotheses. By gathering information, the researcher started to understand the idea of the studied phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2012). In this view, business specialists ensured that hypotheses were identified because of observational research and not the other way around. As such, the researchers began from exact evidence to create hypothetical explorations (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). In our research, the inductive approach is used to develop research hypotheses.

The Use of Survey Method

This study aims at investigating direct and indirect associations between experiencing divorce and school dropout. The survey method was more suitable in the collection and analysis of data in the quantitative approach because the number of questionnaires is 265. This number is high and is difficult to be analyzed qualitatively. Moreover, the collected data could be used to propose an understanding of the relationships among the research variables.

The Use of Interview Method

Beside survey method used in this study, the researcher also employed qualitative research methodology since it is distinguished by its ability to present complex textual descriptions regarding the ways in which individuals experience a specific issue, introducing a detailed background about the human side of this issue. Individual biographical studies are a valuable means in highlighting life conditions in changing societies and can explore transmission of experiences and problems when moving from one social situation to another one (Chamberlayne, Rustin and Wengraf, 2002)

Participants

Participants in Questionnaire

In this study, Sample characteristics included three major items: age, gender, and religion. Age variable is critical in this study since all participants' age should range from 15 to 18 years. Gender is also an important variable to explore which gender is affected more from parent's divorce. Religion is the last variable examined to determine its role in limited the negative effects of divorce on school drop-out/achievement. Table 2 indicates the result analysis of demographic variables. The researcher also listed the percentage and frequency of each variable for children whose parents are married and children whose parents are divorced according to the categories of the survey.

Table 1: Characteristics of Respondents (N= 218)

Variables	Valid		Married parents	Divorced parents	Total
Age	15	Frequencies	29	25	54
		Percentage	25.7	23.8	24.8
	16	Frequencies	38	12	50
		Percentage	33.6	11.4	22.9
	17	Frequencies	22	28	50
		Percentage	19.5	26.7	22.9
	18	Frequencies	24	40	64
		Percentage	21.2	38.1	29.4
Total	Frequencies	113	105	218	
	Percentage	100	100	100	
Gender	Male	Frequencies	54	38	92
		Percentage	47.8	36.2	42.2
	Female	Frequencies	59	67	126
		Percentage	52.2	63.8	57.8
	Total	Frequencies	113	105	218
		Percentage	100	100	100
Religion	Moslem	Frequencies	113	105	218
		Percentage	100	100	100
	Christian	Frequencies	-	-	-
		Percentage	-	-	-
	Druze	Frequencies	-	-	-
		Percentage	-	-	-
	Other	Frequencies	-	-	-
		Percentage	-	-	-
	No answer	Frequencies	-	-	-
		Percentage	-	-	-
Total	Frequencies	113	105	218	
	Percentage	100	100	100	

Source: generated by the author.

The sample was about equally divided according to the age, but one third of the children with married parents belonged to the 16-age group while for divorced parents the age 18 was most frequent. Girls were more present both in the married parent's group (52.2%) and divorced parents' group (63.8%). Actually, there are almost two times more girls coming from the divorced families than boys (36.2%). All respondents (with married and divorced parents) are Muslim. None of the respondents is Christian, Druze, or other religious groups.

Interviews Participants

Participants in the interviews vary between students coming from divorced parents, educational consultants, regular visit officers, psychologists, social workers, and divorced parents.

Regarding students' sample, the number of students participating is 14 students coming from divorced parents. 14 students of divorced parents are included. Table 2 indicates detailed information about the students.

Table 2: *Detailed Information about the Students (N= 14)*

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Religion	Year of Divorce	Number of siblings	Do you work?
1- Apo	18	Male	Muslim	2010	4	Yes
2- Anna	18	Female	Muslim	2014	4	Yes
3- Ashj	18	Female	Muslim	2009	2	No
4- Joney	15	Male	Muslim	2015	4	No
5- Mohi	15	Male	Muslim	2014	2	Yes
6- Asmaa	15	Female	Muslim	2016	4	No
7- Haem	18	Male	Muslim	2007	3	No
8- Goma	17	Male	Muslim	2013	3	Yes
9- Mahran	17	Male	Muslim	2017	5	No
10- Engy	16	Female	Muslim	2014	4	No
11- Kamo	16	Female	Muslim	2010	2	No
12- Risho	18	Female	Muslim	2012	5	Yes
13- Yado	17	Male	Muslim	2015	3	Yes
14- Lobna	16	Female	Muslim	2009	1	No

Source: generated by the author.

Regarding the educational consultants' sample, the number of educational consultants participating is 4 consultants. 14 educational consultants were included in this study. Table 3 indicates detailed information about the educational consultants.

Table 3: *Detailed Information about the Educational Consultants (N= 4)*

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Marital status	Number of children
1- Amany	Female	54	Married	5
2- Badr	Male	47	Married	5
3- Moham	Male	51	Married	6
4- Gemy	Male	43	Married	3

Source: generated by the author.

As for the regular visit officers' sample, the number of those officers participating is 6 officers. 6 persons participated during visit offices. Table 4 indicates detailed information about the regular visit officers.

Table 4: *Detailed Information about the Regular Visit Officers (N= 6)*

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Marital status	Number of children
1- Basio	Male	35	Married	2
2- Galila	Female	50	Married	5
3- Ahmed	Male	54	Married	4
4- Simon	Female	41	Divorced	2
5- Lardo	Male	39	Married	2
6- Gony	Male	42	Married	5

Source: generated by the author.

Regarding the psychologists' sample, the number of psychologists participating is 5 psychologists. 5 psychologists were included in this study. Table 5 indicates detailed information about the psychologists.

Table 5: *Detailed Information about the Psychologists (N= 5)*

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Marital status	Number of children
1- Donia	Female	49	Married	4
2- Rachad	Male	38	Married	1
3- Mounir	Male	29	Single	-
4- Zakia	Female	37	Divorced	3
5- Randa	Female	51	Married	5

Source: generated by the author.

Regarding the social workers' sample, the number of social workers participating is 9 social workers. 6 social workers participated in this study. Table 6 indicates the detailed information about the social workers.

Table 6: *Detailed Information about the Social Workers (N=6)*

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Marital status	Number of children
1- Rateb	Male	27	Single	-
2- Gamal	Male	49	Married	5
3- Amgad	Male	33	Married	2
4- Rania	Female	31	Single	-
5- Mohan	Female	52	Married	7
6- Hania	Female	40	Married	5
7- Radia	Female	35	Married	4
8- Ahmor	Male	41	Married	5
9- Kamal	Male	37	Married	4

Source: generated by the author.

Finally, regarding the parents sample, the number of parents participating is 16 parents. 16 parents were included in the study sample. Table 7 indicates detailed information about the parents.

Table 7: *Detailed Information about the Parents (N= 16)*

Pseudonym	Gender	Year of marriage	Year of Divorce	Number of Children	Age
1- Ahmed	Male	1980	2003	5	65
2- Maged	Male	1993	2010	4	53
3- Reda	Male	1990	2014	6	50
4- Moataz	Male	2001	20012	3	45
5- Ivona	Female	1995	2006	4	47
6- Mamdouh	Male	1987	2009	7	63
7- Adel	Male	1993	2001	4	51
8- Gamila	Female	1997	2016	3	49
9- Ismail	Male	1988	2010	6	58
10- Ibrahim	Male	2000	2015	4	54
11- Rana	Female	1995	2009	5	60
12- Amina	Female	2003	2017	2	58
13- Maher	Male	1999	2015	4	53
14- Magdy	Male	2004	2013	3	43
15- Ihab	Male	1991	2003	5	59
16- Ahlam	Female	2000	2009	2	38

Source: generated by the author.

Data Analysis

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is used to analyze data collected, aiming to explore the parameters of measurement model. Moreover, SEM's main objective is to test the theoretical models that entail the existence of relationships among variables (Schumacker and Lomax, 2004). Actually, SEM has widely used in research since it considers the estimation error while factually dissecting information. SEM was used as a part of Partial Least Squares (PLS) investigation, and covariance-based, e.g., those used as a part of LISREL.

Partial Least Squares (PLS), which was used to measure the model parameters, was developed by Wold (1975) for instances where data could not meet the assumptions amount of covariance-based SEM strategies (Fornell and Bookstein, 1982). PLS increased the clarified variation of ward factors by disaggregating the general model into components which were steady at the same time (Chin, 1998).

For analyzing the interview data, the Nvivo computer software program, as a data management tool, was used to successfully produce the relevant findings. In this case, qualitative data analysis is a subjective interpretive process according to Mauthner and Doucet (1998). Thus, the utilization of Nvivo computer software program as the only means of data management is justified. Moreover, the use of Nvivo computer software program allows the examination of the research trail. Once all the transcripts were imported into the program, the analysis process began.

IV. Results and Discussion

Response Rate

As stated in the methodology chapter, SPSS software program was used to analyze data collected. In addition, the purposeful sampling was used to select the children sample.

Three hundred and six questionnaires (confidence interval of 95%) were collected. Seventy seven questionnaires (25.2%) were invalid because they did not complete most sections (question No. 9, Social well-being, and school achievement). Thus, in the end, 229 of the questionnaires (74.8%) were used in data screening. After data screening, 11 questionnaires were classified as outliers. Therefore, the final total sample included 218 questionnaires (71.2% of the initial sample). This was acceptable as the error margin (accuracy) was at 5%, and confidence interval was at 95%. Table (9) exhibits the summary of the overall response for this study.

Table 8: Summary of Response Rate

Survey instrument	Total (N)	Percentage	Margin of error	Interval confidence
Total survey	306	100%	0.05%	95%
Invalid survey	77	25.2%		
Outliers	11	3.6%		
Valid survey	218	71.2%	0.05%	0.95%

Source: generated by the author.

• Social participation

Table 8 shows the social participation of both children of married and divorced parents.

Regarding children of married parents, The mean value for the statement "I see myself as a part of the community" is 4.38, indicating that respondents greatly accept that statement. The standard deviation value is 1.02, while the mean value for the statement "I contribute enough in society" is 3.36, reflecting that respondents agree with that statement. The standard deviation value is 1.12.

Table 38: Children's Social Participation

Items			strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat disagree	disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	SD
I see myself as part of the community	Married parents	Frequencies	74	19	12	5	3	4.38	1.02
		Percentage	65.5	16.8	10.6	4.4	2.7		
	Divorced parents	Frequencies	10	2	7	21	65	1.77	1.25
		Percentage	9.5	1.9	6.7	20	61.9		
I contribute enough in society	Married parents	Frequencies	28	34	12	29	10	3.36	1.12
		Percentage	24.8	30.1	10.6	25.7	8.8		
	Divorced parents	Frequencies	14	17	32	21	21	2.83	1.29
		percentage	13.3	16.2	30.5	20	20		

Source: generated by the author based on SPSS outputs.

Regarding children of divorced parents, the mean value for the statement "I see myself as a part of the community" is 1.77, denoting that respondents disagree that statement. The standard deviation value is 1.25; whereas the mean value for the statement "I contribute enough in society" is 2.83, stressing those respondents reject the statement. The standard deviation value is 1.29.

Interview results

The Effect of the Divorce Phenomenon on the Social participation

Everyone agreed that divorce clearly affected social skills of students, and the extent of their participation in social participation.

Equally important, six interviewees (Maged, 53 years, divorced since 2010; Ahmed, 54 years, married; Randa, 51 years, married; Rateb, 27 years, single; Mahran, 17 years, his parents got divorced in 2017; Moataz, 45 years, divorced in 2012) pointed out, "There were some impacts of divorce that affected psyche of students and made them felt that they were inferior compared with their peers in married families". They pointed out that family breakdown made students feel anxious and sad, hindering their social and interactive development, loss of confidence, and inability to exchange feelings of love with others, loss of feelings of belonging and mental illness, and behavioral and aggressive deviation. Children of divorced families also suffered from emotional, behavioral, and social problems like depression, low levels of ambition, and nervousness. All these impacts affected their social skills and their participation in social participation".

One interviewee (Galila, 50 years, married) highlighted that "Divorce often led to a loss of contact with a parent. This loss also caused students to lose knowledge and social skills, and to lose one of the most important emotional and financial sources of support from parents."

On other hand, eight of them (Apo, 18 years, his parents got divorced in 2010; Yado, 17 years, his parents got divorced in 2015; Lobna, 16 years, her parents got divorced in 2009; Amany, 54 years, married; Ahlam, 38 years, divorced in 2009; Maher, 53 years, divorced in 2015; Amgad, 33 years, married; Radia, 35 years, married) mentioned that "children of divorced families had a weak level of social skills since they were not able to interact and communicate with others emotionally. They also faced difficulties in expressing positive feelings."

Moreover, four interviewees (Rachad, 38 years, married; Zakia, 37 years, divorced; Mamdouh, 63 years, divorced in 2009; Ashj, 18 years, parents divorced in 2009) clarified that "low social skills of these children pushed them into isolation, and this was reflected in their lack of participation in social participation. Actually, they deviated from dealing with others. These children felt that they were less than their friends and classmates who lived within a family, and they felt that they were deprived of the parents' sympathy".

V. Recommendations:

1. Conducting more studies on the psychological and social effects of divorce on children, using representative samples and codified research tools that are integrated in quantitative and qualitative methodology.
2. To educate young women and men who are about to get married with the information and life and social skills necessary for a happy and effective married life, capable of dealing with marital problems efficiently and effectively.
3. It is necessary to provide psychological, social and material support to families affected by divorce, in order to spare them and the children the scourge of the bitter experience that could destroy their present and future lives.
4. The print and visual media should educate the newlyweds about the duties and rights of spouses
5. The curricula must include materials related to the family, its composition, duties and mission, in a manner that is appropriate for each academic stage or age, especially for university students.
6. Associations should be established to provide advice and guidance to parents in the case of problems.
7. The various official and private sectors must cooperate to study the phenomenon of divorce in order to develop ways to treat it.

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Rana khaleel. "The Relation between the divorce experience and the social participation of children aged 15-18 years." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 27(06), 2022, pp. 01-08.