



CHARACTERIZING THE PSYCHOSOCIAL RAMIFICATION OF DIVORCE ON ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH: THE CASE OF AKSUM TOWN

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Abstract

Perhaps divorce is characterized by better half for some children and a bitter half for more children, thus the objective of the present research is to identify the psychosocial ramification of divorce (PSRD) on children. It employed a comparative cross-sectional research design, purposive quota sampling technique, and the sample size becomes 133 participants, the same sample size was taken from intact family for a norming purpose. It was analyzed through the quantitative approach of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 for windows and the results of all analysis' were supplemented by tick narrative theme wise qualitative descriptions. The present study revealed that there was a high level of depression, personal stress, peer's and school problems, and aggression on their children. Therefore, the more the control on problematic factors by their family, the less PSRD their children experienced.

Keywords: Psychosocial, Ramifications, Divorce, and Children



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1. INTRODUCTION

Of all social systems and structures, family exists as the sensitivity element of all society. The family is the basic life structure and a social unit that serves the main function of reproduction and socialization to meet the needs and necessities of its member and society in

general. Depending on the values and norms of the society there are different forms of arrangements to start family life. The formal roadmap to enter family life is marriage, which is the union of couples committed to one another with the expectation of intimate affiliation which is socially approved (Serkalem, 2006).

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In Ethiopia marriage can be conducted before an officer of civil status, religious and cultural persons, who fulfil the essential conditions; the free and full consent of couples, age above 18, prohibition of consanguinity, affinity, bigamy and representation as stated in Article 6-16 Revised Family Code of Ethiopia (RFCE, 2000).

Family is an institution in which intimate and sexual interpersonal relationships were acknowledged in a variety of ways for various reasons; emotional, spiritual, legal, social, cultural, economical, and depending on the culture, religion and legalities in which they were found, hence such a union often formalized via a wedding ceremony called matrimony or marriage. Marriage is more than living together as a social contract, its laws and rules are determined by the culture in which they exist. Family system was not a static institution instead it confronts with dynamic factors of sustenance and terminations in either voluntary or involuntary, this can be either through an inevitable natural order death or divorce (Olson et al., 2000 and Peterson et al., 1986).

There are miscellaneous reasons account for divorce such as lack of communication, commitment and fidelity; abandonment; abuses (substance, physical, sexual and emotional); age and sexual incompatibility; socio-cultural and religion difference; domination in the home; the financial problem, unrealistic expectation and agreed to depart. But its far-reaching psychosocial effect tends to be high on children emotional development lived with one parent (Elooff, 2003 and Levinger et al., 1979).

Divorce is a legal ending of valid marriage contract. It occurred when partners have no possible or satisfactory solution to living together and perceive divorce as a culmination of poor marital adjustments by a means of religion, cultural, and judicial order. Findings depicted that children from divorced family were experiencing parental alienation, stress, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, delinquency, underachievement, child abuse and vulnerability to life in the street (Amato, 1993; Amato et al., 1991 & Wallerstein, 2005).

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In Ethiopia about 45% of first marriage ends in divorce within 3 years; 28% of first marriage ends in divorce within 5 years, 34% within 10 years and 40% within 20 years. The actual divorce rate statistical reports in Addis Ababa of different age group 506,852 were married while 97,147 are divorced (CSA, 2010 and Tilson et al., 2000).

Thus, the rational motive of the present study was attempting to explore the PSRD on adolescent and youth. Beyond the horizon of divorce lets think who get sufferer of divorce; Are not children? Imagine, if you are being married and get children do you consider that divorce is a solution for the problem you faced? Is it better half or bitter half? With whom do you think that do your children wish to nurture? These are the most challenging thoughts than simply calling the term divorce. Therefore, the present study was devoted to answering the following research questions;

- ✎ Do demographic factors make a significant difference on children psychosocial ramifications?
- ✎ Is there any significant difference between children from divorced and intact family on their psychological ramifications (depression, self-esteem & personal stress) and their social ramifications (aggression, peer's and school problem)?

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

There is no best age limit for being affected by divorce. For many children, the biggest alarm is fear of losing their parents and worry about physical needs, their concerns and responses are depending upon their cognitive and emotional development. Younger children are at risk for a short-term period due to confusions of divorce and loss of the parent, but they are less able to make sense of all the changes that are occurring. However, adolescent children are more at risk over the long-term, because their close alignment with their peers represses their feelings regarding their parents' divorce (Furstenburg et al., 2001; Fergusson et al., 1994; Kalmijn, 2007 & Wolf, 1998).

Boys and girls tend to react differently to their parents' divorce. Normatively girls characterized by withdrawn, emotion (crying, worries, and fears), verbally aggressive, sexually active and face eating problems than girls from intact families; while boys tend to become more physically aggressive, delinquent, lower self-esteem and the absence of the male role model makes more difficult for boys to adjust gender-based identity development (Amato et al., 1991 and Elooff, 2003).

3. METHODS

The present study was mainly quantitative descriptive approach focused on comparative cross-sectional design with an intention to describe the PSRD on children in comparison with children from the intact family. Tick theme wise qualitative description was followed the statistical results to create a visualized image of the results (Creswell, 2003).

The study was conducted in Aksum town social and sharia courts. The method that was used to select samples was purposive quota sampling technique, hence the sample size becomes 133 and the same sample size was taken for children from intact family for a norming purpose. Meanwhile, 126 and 132 questionnaires were returned completely from divorced and intact family children respectively. Depression, self-esteem, aggression, personal stress, peers and school problem as dependent variables and demographic factors of participants as independent variables.

3.1 INSTRUMENTS

Data were collected via adapted standardized scales of Multi Problematic Screening Inventory (MPSI). The inventory has proposed constructs of child and family health, family relationships, sources of support and community involvements. The psychometric property of the general scale Cronbach α was .80 and higher for all MPSI subscales with a standard error of measurement .05 (Hudson & McMurtry, 1997). The questionnaires were translated into local state language to protect doubt of participants. The internal consistency of the general scale after pilot test Cronbach α was .96 with a standard error of measurement .05.

3.2 ANALYSIS

Data were subjected to statistical analysis of SPSS version 20.0. Accordingly, for the first research question; do demographic factors make a significant difference on children psychosocial ramifications? Since sex and religion of participants have categorical nature to see their significant difference independent sample t-test was employed, but to explore the impact of current age and family size due to their continued nature ANOVA was computed, but living residence of respondents was depicted in terms of percentage. The second research question; is there any significant difference between children from divorced and intact family on their psychological ramifications (depression, self-esteem, and personal stress) and their social ramifications (aggression, peer and school problem) independent sample t-test was employed. Each analysis results were supplemented by tick qualitative theme wise descriptions.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic Factors of Participants

Table 1 Independent Sample Test for Sex Difference

| <i>DV's</i> | <i>Male (n=53)</i> | | <i>Female (n=73)</i> | | <i>T</i> | <i>Df</i> | <i>Cohen's' f</i> |
|--------------|--------------------|-----------|----------------------|-----------|-------------|------------------|-------------------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | | | |
| TLD | 34.58 | 6.36 | 35.66 | 6.39 | -.932 ns | 124 ^a | .007 |
| TLSE | 37.55 | 6.93 | 37.16 | 7.44 | .293 ns | 124 ^a | .0007 |
| TLPS | 36.98 | 8.62 | 36.95 | 9.17 | .022 ns | 124 ^a | .000004 |
| TLPP | 38.42 | 8.34 | 39.67 | 7.99 | -.855 ns | 124 ^a | .006 |
| TLA | 30.30 | 8.78 | 28.66 | 9.14 | 1.014 ns | 124 ^a | .0008 |
| TLScP | 31.89 | 8.59 | 31.89 | 8.52 | -1.108 ns | 124 ^a | .01 |

DV's-dependent variables, ^a df Leven's test for equality of variance assumed, M- mean, SD- standard deviation, ns- not significant

Regarding the independent samples t-test of sex, there was no statistically significant difference in the mean of psychosocial scores for males and females; sex difference did not have a significant difference on the psychosocial effect of children from the divorced family. In contrary to the present study many research findings were showed that as there was a significant difference in sex and PSRD on children; boys and girls tend to react differently to their parents' divorce; as a habitual normative rule girls tend to become anxious, withdrawn, emotional, relational and social aggression, may become sexually active earlier with being hurt in romantic relationships and exhibit more eating problems than girls from intact families, while boys tend to become more physically aggressive, engaging and delinquent behaviour (Elooff, 2003).

Table 2 Independent Sample Test for Religion Difference

| <i>DV's</i> | <i>Christian (n=106)</i> | | <i>Muslim (n=20)</i> | | <i>T</i> | <i>Df</i> | <i>Cohen's' f</i> |
|-------------|--------------------------|-----------|----------------------|-----------|------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | | | |
| TLD | 35.02 | 5.97 | 36.20 | 8.30 | -.607 ns | 22.852 ^b | .003 |
| TLSE | 37.27 | 7.53 | 37.60 | 5.35 | -.233 ns | 34.993 ^b | .0004 |
| TLPS | 37.01 | 8.22 | 36.70 | 12.18 | .109 ns | 22.379 ^b | .0001 |
| TLPP | 39.61 | 8.25 | 36.65 | 7.13 | 1.503 ns | 124 ^a | .018 |
| TLA | 29.28 | 8.87 | 29.70 | 9.84 | -.190 ns | 124 ^a | .0003 |

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------|-------|------|-------|-------|--------|------------------|------|
| TLSc | 31.83 | 8.21 | 32.20 | 10.22 | 4.667* | 124 ^a | .149 |
| P | | | | | | | |

*DV's-dependent variables, ^a df Leven's test for equality of variance assumed, ^b not assumed, M- mean, SD- standard deviation, *p<.05, ns- not significant*

The similar implication was true for the religion of participants, concerning the independent-samples t-test of religion that was conducted to compare psychosocial effect for Christian and Muslim; there was no statistically significant difference in the mean of the scores. But school problem scores for Christian and Muslim; Christian ($M=31.83, SD=8.21$) and Muslim [$M=32.20, SD=10.22; t(124) = 4.667, sig=.000$], there was statistically significant difference in the mean of school problem scores for Christian and Muslim and the magnitude of the differences in the means was large (eta squared=.149, this implies that only 14.9% of the variance in school problem is explained by religion). In general, with the exception of school problem religion has no significant difference in the psychosocial effect of children from a divorced parent.

Finding concerning divorce shows that, divorce was more common among Orthodox Christian than Muslim groups, even though both groups of religion discourages divorce, the variation of divorce rate between the groups is explained in relation to the extent of roles that both religions play in the lives of the believers. Therefore, having a proportional sample size for sex and religion of respondents there might bring insignificant difference on the psychosocial ramifications on children from divorced parent across these demographic variables (Tilson & Larsen, 2000).

Table 3 ANOVA for Age Difference

| <i>DV's</i> | <i>Gtopup-1</i> | | <i>Group-2</i> | | <i>Group-3</i> | | <i>Combin</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>df</i> |
|-------------|-----------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|---------------|---------------------|-----------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | | | |
| TLD | 36.28 | 6.09 | 34.84 | 6.34 | 34.83 | 7.53 | BG | .606 ^{ns} | 2 |
| TLSE | 36.28 | 7.52 | 37.89 | 7.45 | 36.25 | 3.96 | BG | .718 ^{ns} | 2 |
| TLPS | 38.94 | 8.73 | 36.04 | 8.31 | 38.00 | 12.61 | BG | 1.318 ^{ns} | 2 |
| TLPP | 41.34 | 8.65 | 38.54 | 7.96 | 37.42 | 7.33 | BG | 1.690 | 2 |

| <i>ns</i> | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|-------|----|--------------------|---|
| TLA | 29.78 | 9.45 | 28.93 | 8.58 | 31.08 | 10.93 | BG | .347 ^{ns} | 2 |
| TLScP | 32.78 | 8.01 | 31.50 | 8.82 | 32.17 | 8.17 | BG | .265 ^{ns} | 2 |

*DV's-dependent variables, M- mean, SD- standard deviation, *p<.05, ns- not significant, BG- Between Groups, (Group 1: 12-14; Group 2: 15-19 & Group 3: 20-22)*

ANOVA was conducted to explore the impact of current age level of respondents on their psychosocial effects of divorce, they were divided into three groups according to their current age levels (Group 1: 12-14; Group 2: 15-19 & Group 3: 20-22).

Since the significance value in all levels of psychosocial repercussions was >.05 this depicted as there were no statistically significant difference at the $p \leq .05$ level in all psychosocial scores for the three age-level groups. One finding that go consistent with the presents study and said that the there is no best age limit for being affected by divorce and for many children the biggest concern is the fear of losing their parents and worry about physical needs, but their concerns and responses are depending upon their cognitive and emotional development (Wolf, 1998).

Table 4 ANOVA for Family Size Difference

| <i>DV's</i> | <i>Group-1</i> | | <i>Group-2</i> | | <i>Group-3</i> | | <i>Combine</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>df</i> |
|--------------|----------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|----------------|---------------------|-----------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | | | |
| TLD | 33.70 | 5.63 | 36.08 | 6.37 | 38.57 | 7.9 | BG | 4.343* | 2 |
| TLSE | 38.87 | 7.26 | 36.04 | 7.27 | 35.29 | 5.58 | BG | 2.853 ^{ns} | 2 |
| TLPS | 34.54 | 8.50 | 39.24 | 8.79 | 39.21 | 8.89 | BG | 4.616* | 2 |
| TLPP | 37.89 | 8.37 | 40.43 | 8.10 | 39.93 | 6.71 | BG | 1.446 ^{ns} | 2 |
| TLA | 26.74 | 8.16 | 31.22 | 9.26 | 33.93 | 8.49 | BG | 5.920* | 2 |
| TLScP | 29.89 | 8.86 | 33.73 | 7.79 | 33.93 | 8.05 | BG | 3.404* | 2 |

*DV's-dependent variables, M- mean, SD- standard deviation, *p<.05, ns- not significant, BG- Between Groups, (Group 1: 1-3; Group 2: 4-6 & Group 3: 7⁺)*

ANOVA was conducted to explore the impact of family size to the PSRD on children, participants were divided into three groups according to their family size (Group 1: 1-3; Group 2: 4-6 & Group 3: 7⁺). Though, there was a statistically significant difference at the $p < .05$ in the total level of depression scores for the three family size groups [$F(2, 123) =$

4.343, $p = .015$]. Despite reaching statistical significance, the actual difference in mean scores between the groups was large. For the case of total level of self-esteem since, sig. value was $>.05$; it was not statistically significantly different at the $p \leq .05$ level in the total level of self-esteem scores for the three family size groups. However, there was a statistically significant difference at the $p < .05$ in the total level of personal stress scores for the three family size groups [$F(2, 123) = 4.616, p = .012$]. Despite the far-reaching statistical significance, the actual difference in mean scores between the groups was quite large. Regarding the case of total level of problem with friends since, sig. value was $>.05$; it was not statistically significantly different at the $p \leq .05$ level in the total level of problem with friends scores for the three family size groups.

Meanwhile, there was a statistically significant difference at the $p < .05$ in the total level of aggression scores for the three family size groups [$F(2, 123) = 5.92, p = .004$]. Despite the far-reaching statistical significance, the actual difference in mean scores between the groups was quite too large. The effect size, calculated using eta squared was 0.22. Lastly, there was a statistically significant difference at the $p < .05$ in the total level of school problem scores for the three family size groups [$F(2, 123) = 3.404, p = .036$]. Despite the far-reaching statistical significance, the actual difference in mean scores between the groups was medium.

Table 5 Percentage Descriptions for Level of Living Residence

| No. | Level of Living residence | No. of Respondents | In percent (%) |
|-----|--------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| 1 | With my mother | 58 | 46.03 |
| 2 | With my father | 17 | 13.49 |
| 3 | With my mother & my stepfather | 4 | 3.17 |
| 4 | With my father & my stepmother | 11 | 8.73 |
| 5 | With sibling's | 5 | 3.97 |
| 6 | With grandparent's | 16 | 12.70 |
| 7 | Others | 15 | 11.90 |

The above table 5 portrayed that around half of the participants i.e. 46.03% were lived with their mother, 13.49%, 12.7% and 11.9% of the participant were also lived with their father, grandparent and others respectively. 8.73% of the participants were lived with their father-stepmother. However, a few participants were lived with their mother-stepfather and with siblings and they have accounted 3.17 & 3.97 % respectively. Hence, this indicated that post-

divorce significant amount of children were lived with their mother and this could be a burden for mothers.

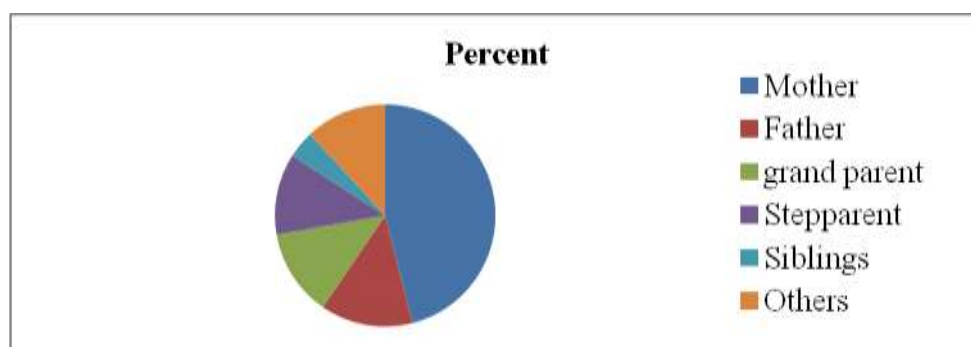


Figure: 1 Percentage of children living residence

Psychosocial Ramification of Divorce on Children: to assess the significant difference in the psychosocial effect of divorce on children demographic data comparison was made between children from divorced and intact family.

Table 6 Mean Difference in psychosocial ramification of divorce

| <i>DV's</i> | <i>Divorced</i> | | <i>Not Divorced</i> | | <i>T</i> | <i>Df</i> | <i>Cohen's f</i> |
|-------------|-----------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|----------|----------------------|------------------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | | | |
| TLD | 35.21 | 6.37 | 35.88 | 5.51 | -.908* | 256 ^a | .003 |
| TLSE | 37.33 | 7.21 | 42.93 | 7.35 | -6.184* | 256 ^a | .13 |
| TLPS | 36.96 | 8.91 | 30.40 | 7.92 | 6.259* | 256 ^a | .13 |
| TLPP | 39.14 | 8.13 | 43.58 | 5.85 | 5.007* | 226.402 ^b | .10 |
| TLA | 29.35 | 8.99 | 27.71 | 8.45 | 1.508* | 256 ^a | .01 |
| TLScP | 31.89 | 8.51 | 34.37 | 7.44 | -2.497* | 256 ^a | .02 |
| | N=126 | | N=132 | | | | |

*DV's-dependent variables, ^a df Leven's test for equality of variance assumed, ^b not assumed, * p < .05, M- mean, SD- standard deviation*

The results of the analysis of independent-samples t-test that was conducted to compare the depression scores show that there was a significant difference in scores for children from divorced family ($M=35.21, SD=6.37$) and children from intact family [$M=35.88, SD=5.51; t(256) = -.908^*$]. The same is true for self-esteem scores illustrates that there was a significant difference in scores for children from divorced family ($M=37.33, SD=7.21$) and children from intact family [$M=42.93, SD=7.35; t(256) = -6.184$]. The magnitude of the differences in the

means was the large effect ($\eta^2=0.13$), so divorce has a large effect on self-esteem for children from the divorced family.

The personal stress scores portray that there was a significant difference in scores for children from divorced family ($M=36.96$, $SD=8.91$) and children from intact family [$M=30.40$, $SD=7.92$; $t(256)=6.259$]. The magnitude of the differences in the means has a large effect ($\eta^2=0.13$), hence divorce has a large effect on personal stress to children from a divorced family in compared with children from the intact family. Similarly, for peer problem scores, that was a significant difference in scores for children from divorced family ($M=39.14$, $SD=8.13$) and children from intact family [$M=43.58$, $SD=5.85$; $t(226.402)=5.007$]. The magnitude of the differences in the means was the moderate effect ($\eta^2=0.10$). Therefore, divorce has a moderate effect on peer problem for children from a divorced family in compared with the intact family.

The aggression scores for divorced and intact family children's shows that there was a significant difference in scores for children from divorced family ($M=29.35$, $SD=8.99$) and children from intact family [$M=27.71$, $SD=8.45$; $t(256)=1.508$]. It was also true for school problem scores, that was a significant difference in scores for children from divorced family ($M=31.89$, $SD=8.51$) and children from intact family [$M=34.37$, $SD=7.44$; $t(256)=-2.497$]. The magnitude of the differences in the means was the small effect ($\eta^2=0.02$). Therefore divorce has a small effect on school problem to children from a divorced family in compared with children from the intact family. Inconsistent with the present study, considerable research has focused on the extent to which divorce affects adolescent development. Divorced family children exhibit higher rates of depression, suicide, low self-esteem, anxiety, intense anger, loneliness, socially disadvantageous, alcohol abuse and mental health problem in comparison to intact family children (Hetherington et al., 2002 and Sweeney et al., 2001).

5. SUGGESTIONS

Divorce could have a significant consequence on the psychosocial wellbeing of adolescents and youth.

- There is a need to increase social and sharia court judges awareness of divorce.
- Researchers on divorce should include divergent participants from different ethnic, cultural, and age backgrounds.

- Analyzing participant's family background could be helpful in studying psychosocial consequences of divorce on children.
- Sufficient and representative sample size must be used in order to make a generalization to the greater population with more confidence.
- Local university team researchers, stakeholders, and local governments should conduct the further study on divorce.
- Local University counselors as community services have to provide guidance and counseling services for family, couples, and children on vital family issues.

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