

## **Problems Faced by Divorced Women while Educating their Children in Malakand, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Divorce is one of the growing social problems in modern societies (Nikolis and Zatand, 2015). Pakistan includes in list of countries where divorce rates are gradually increasing. The current study is an effort to explore the issue faced by divorced women while educating their children. The study has been conducted in District Malakand, Khayber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. This study is explorative and is framed under qualitative research design. Sampling for the study has been done purposively whereby a total of 25 divorced women having education up to at least metric level were sampled. Information from the respondents has been collected through interview guide and is analyzed thematically. Findings of the study show that divorced women are confronted with many socio-economic problems while schooling their children. In addition, divorced women face many problems while educating their children, for instance, lack of aspiration, lack of economic support, transport problems, frequent residential moves and lack of adjustment etc.

**KEY WORDS:** Divorce, Women, Schooling, Children, Problems etc.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background of the Study**

Family and marriage are universal social institutions that fulfill several important functions, which are significant to both individual and society. Social institutions such as marriage and family provide individuals with socio-economic and psychological support, regulates sexuality in culturally approved manner, provides psychological satisfaction, expand social relationships, and help in provision of economic support (Kornblum, 2012). Despite the fact that marriage serves the society in multiple ways; is also confronted with plethora of issues and challenges, which affects society in many important ways. These issues and challenges include marital instability and considerably easy dissolution of marriages resulting in divorce (Stevenson and Wolfers, 2007; Amato, 2000).

Divorce affects marriage as an institution i.e. by disturbing the socio-economic and psychological functions fulfilled by marriage (see Clark, 2015). Globally, divorce rate is rising (Hartz and Niaz, 2015) such as in the United States, it is estimated that 40% of all marriages ended in divorce by 2008. Similarly, in Australia, nearly every third marriage ends with divorce (Parveen, 2010) while in Saudi Arabia, about 70 thousand marriages held annually while 13 thousand marriages end with divorce (Al-Huwaider, 2009).

Divorced women are confronted with significant problems regarding the schooling of their children. The most notable among such problems are frequent residential moves (disturbing the continuity of schooling), inability to pay school fee leading to transfer to low quality school or even discontinuation of school, inability to help children in home work and to visit to school, inability to pay transport fee and to buy books and meet daily expenses of the children. There are numerous reasons for facing such problems while schooling their children such as divorced women often live their life in poverty, they suffer from mental illness leading to decreased focus on their children as well as remain in search of job or work outside home which do not allow them to focus on the schooling of their children. Concomitantly, children of divorced women perform poorly in schools. For further details see the studies of Amato & James (2010), Haynie & South, (2005), Potter (2010), Gruber (2004) and Fagan (2011).

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### Statement of the Problem

Research indicates that during the last decade, a significant rise in divorce rate has been evident in Pakistan (Zafar, 2011). Only in Lahore, there were about 75,000 registered divorce cases during the span of February 2005 to January 2008 while the number increased to 1, 24141 during February 2008 and May 2011 (Rao, 2011) while on average, about more than 100 divorce cases are registered in family courts on daily basis (Hussnain, 2014). In addition, a substantial increase is observable in courts of Gujranwala in 2015. Keeping in view the statistics of the district, family courts have separated as many as 4500 couples out of 5000 applicants (Dunya News, 2015). In the capital city Islamabad, 557 couples divorced in 2011, while in 2002, 208 couples were divorced. According to a survey conducted by Gilani Research Foundation Pakistan, nearly half of all Pakistanis (48%) believe that the rate of divorce has been increased (Gallup International Association, 2010). Statistics shows that the number of couples getting divorced has increased by 4.9% from the year 2010 to 2011 (Saleem, 2012). Further, after 2002 about 50 per cent rise was observed in divorce cases initiated by females as a result of Muslim Family Courts Amendment Ordinance (Zafar, 2011).

Divorced women face problems in upbringing of their children to settle down their life and future (Kotwal and Prabhakar, 2009; Hassan, 2015). Women's balanced emotional, socio-economic position and better physical health is necessary for healthy development of a child. Children of emotionally tortured, socio-economically unbalanced and suffering from poor physical health women are at a high risk of developing problems in future (Zafar and Kausar, 2014). It is difficult for a divorced woman to provide proper guidance to children, take care of them and to provide them with basic social needs i.e. food, shelter, schooling, hospitalization etc., which manifestly affect their socio-economic wellbeing. Consequently, such children may not thrive physically; probably they do not perform better in education and may suffer from psychological problems (Hassan, 2015; Kotwal and Prabhakar, 2009; Amato and Booth, 1994).

Divorced women having children are vulnerable to many difficulties in life. In this regard, management of children including their socialization and economic fulfillments are highly difficult tasks for divorced women (Nikolis and Zataand, 2015). Women suffer from emotional and economic problems; as a result, such women face significant problems while socializing and economically taking care of their children (Spillman, Lorenz, Wickramma, 2006; Parveen, 2010). Divorced women are less able to provide their children with appropriate and hygienic food, water and shelter as well as pocket money and other personal expenses (Kotwal and Prabhakar, 2009; Saleem, 2012). Further, divorced women facing significant economic problems are unable to provide their children with quality education and consequently, they suffer from lack of educational aspiration and perform weakly in educational stream (Sun and Li, 2002). Divorced mothers also face problems in providing recreational facilities to children where they are scarcely available with toys and other recreational facilities (Carol, MacKinnon, Brody, and Stoneman, 1982). Considering the problems of divorced women, this study will be an effort to explore the socio-economic problems faced by divorced women in socializing and fulfilling the economic needs of their children.

### Objective of the Study

- To know about problems of divorced women in fulfilling the educational needs of their children

## METHODOLOGY

### Nature of the Study

This study is explorative and is framed under qualitative research design. The current study is explorative in nature, for instance, an exploration of problems faced by divorced women while educating their children. In addition to it, on the basis of nature of investigation this study is qualitative, for instance, the information is presented in textual form such as transcription, narration and discussion.

The current study has utilized non-probability of technique for sample selection specifically purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling (also known as judgment, selective or subjective sampling) is a sampling technique in which researcher relies on inclusion of samples which fulfils a specific criteria in accordance to the study conducted. In this regard, the inclusion criterion for the current study was:

- Divorced women
- The divorced women must have children of school age

On the basis of mentioned criteria, a total of 25 divorced women having educated of metric level or above and having children were sampled for the current study. In addition, interview guide is utilized as a tool for data collection. Keeping in view the nature of the study interview guide was a suitable tool for data collection. Besides, interview guide provided the researcher with flexibility and ability to gain an insight to the issue. Lastly, the collected information through interview guide will be narrated, and linked with literary information in order to extract results.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Part-A: Socio-Demographic Information

This portion of analysis is devoted to socio-demographic information about respondents whereby age and gender wise distribution, educational and marital status, family type and income level of respondents are presented in tabular form along with its description. For further details see the tables below

#### 4.1.2 Age wise Distribution of Respondents

Life means “The time from birth to death and life expectancy is the age of a person (Garbarino & Abramowitz 1992; Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2014). It is an important aspect of human life as it includes physical, psychological and social growth related to maturity of a person. With increase in age, the intellectual maturity of a person may increase as well. Age is an important aspect related to life whether it animals or plants (Louise, 2005). The term age refers to “How long something has existed” (Word Web, 2015). Age is one of the factors associated with variation response, attitude and perception towards processes, phenomena and various other social aspects. Age factor is a category for sorting out social research to accumulate relevant information provided by different age group of people. In relevance to the current study, age is an important factor because age can determine the earning level of divorced women, their care for children, mental conditions and efforts to provide care and support for children. The age wise distribution of the respondents is presented in the table below

**Table No. 01: Age Wise distribution of Respondents**

Age of the respondent	Frequency	Percentage
15-25	09	36
26-35	12	48
36-45	04	16
Total	25	100

#### Description

Statistical information in the table shows that 09 (36%) respondents were in the age category of 15-25. 12 (48%) respondents were in the age category of 26-35 years, and 04 (16%) respondents were in the age category of 36-45 years.

#### Number of Children of the Respondents

In relevance to the current study, number of children is an important aspect. According to (Ratzen, 2013) number of children is important while considering the socio-economic status of a family. Poor families cannot afford a higher number of children as income level determines the facilitation provided to children, their food, education, health etc. besides, the number of children living with single parent (specifically women) is also important to be considered while educating them, providing health facilities and socializing the children. Keeping in view such an eminence of number of children, the below table contains information regarding the number of children respondent had (see the table no.02):

**Table no. 03: Number of Children**

Number of children	Frequency	Percentage
01	12	48
02	08	32
03	04	26
04 or more	01	04
Total	25	100

#### Description

Statistical information in the table no. 03 shows that 12 (48%) respondents were having one child. 8 (32%) respondents were having 02 children; 04 (26%) respondents were having 03 children while 01 (04%) respondent had more than four children.

#### School Enrolment Status of the Children

Children’s status of being enrolled in school or not is an important factor with regard to the current study. Enrolled children require more attention as they spend time outside home as well as such children requires a higher level of income due to their expenses on education. The following table contains information regarding the school enrolment of children of the sampled divorced women (see the table below):

**Table no. 04: School Enrolment Status of the Children**

Educational status	Frequency	Percentage
Going to school	13	52
Not going school	12	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

**Description**

Statistical information in the table no. 04 shows that 13 (52%) children were enrolled in school where as 12 (48%) children were not enrolled in school.

**School Grade Details of Enrolled Children**

Grade level of children indicates their age, level of understanding, spending time outside home, tutor requirements, expenses on schooling etc. In this context, school grade of the enrolled children of divorced women is important aspect as it determines the required focus on behaviour, expenses on education, observation over children outside home etc. therefore, the following table contains information about school grade of the enrolled children (see the table below):

**Table no. 05: School Grade Details of Enrolled Children**

School Grade	Frequency	Percentage
Pre-school	04	30.76
1 <sup>st</sup> to 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	03	23.07
4 <sup>th</sup> to 5 <sup>th</sup> grade	01	07.69
6 <sup>th</sup> to 8 <sup>th</sup> grade	04	30.76
Doing metric	01	07.69
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100</b>

**Description**

Statistical information in the table no. 05 shows that 04 (30.76%) children were enrolled in pre-school grade. 03 (23.07%) children were enrolled lower grades i.e. class 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup>. 01 (07.69%) child was enrolled in 5<sup>th</sup> grade; 04 (30.76%) children were enrolled grade 6 to 8, and 01 (07.69%) child was in enrolled in grade 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Part-B: Thematic Analysis****Divorce Mothers and Schooling of their Children**

Field information shows that parental divorce affects the education of children. After divorce of parents, the schooling of children is affected. Respondents told that after divorce the children start showing poor results in the school exams. Many of the respondents agreed that prior to divorce their children were performing well in schools and were taking good marks in exam, however, after divorce their performance in school gradually declined, and now sometimes they fail the monthly tests and exams. Besides, the activities of children in school are also affected i.e. games, taking part in debates, quiz competition etc. For validation few of the extracts from the interview are mentioned below:

*"....there is no hesitation in arguing that my daughter's education is significantly affected due to my divorce. There are many reasons for it such as changing homes and changing schools, financial problems and decreased in focus on Haajra (her daughter)...."* (Kausar Nawaz).

A respondent said that:

*"....both of my children were very good in school, however, after divorce Zohaib (her son) is not performing well in tests as well as exams...."* (Azra).

A respondent explicated that:

*"...my children do not take interest in studies as they were interested in studies before divorce..."* (Nazish Ali).

*"....my daughter was a position holder in class but after divorce she has not taken even third position in the class...."* (Lubna Bibi).

*"...My son was a regular participant in quiz competition in school and took 1<sup>st</sup> position many times. But, after divorce, he didn't got any position in last three years. I have noticed that after divorce he has lost interest in school and co-curricular activities..."* (Gulalai).

Field information indicates that the education of children is affected after divorce. Mobility of the children from one place to another (for example with mother as well as residential moves due to rent problems etc.) leads to poor performance among the children of divorced women. After divorce the children move from one place to another with their mother resulting in changing the school, teachers and friends, which in turn affects the education

of the children. Consequently, children lose interest in school as it is difficult for them to get adjusted with new friends, teachers and school environment.

For validation few extracts from the interviews are:

*"...my children liked private school but I had to migrate them to government school as we migrated to new residential area after divorce. Certainly, the migration has affected her school performance...."* (Azra).

*"...my children were attached to their teachers in private schools and were able to learn quite well from them. But after migration to new school, their test and exam marks have been affected...."*

Regarding its reason, a respondent argued that:

*"...the main reason behind the decline in the performance is lack of time provided to them due to frequent residential changes...."* (Sawera Bibi).

*"...I transferred my children from private school to government school and they face problems in understanding the new pattern of teaching...."* (Gul Rukh).

*"...my son was used to group study with his friends but now he is not interested to do study as he miss his friends...."* (Kashmala Khan).

Field information reveals that children who are living with their mothers face many educational problems. Mothers are unable to help them often because doing job and household work and stress. Respondents (e.g. divorced women) argued that they do not ask of about their children from teachers and school staff; they do not help them in doing homework; and do not have time visit schools and ask about their test and exam performance. Some of the respondents do not understand the English language and are not able to for tuition fee as well. In this connection, a respondent stated that:

*"...I do not have time to go to school and ask about the performance of my children...."* (Gul Rukh).

*"...I am busy in doing work to earn money, and not have time to help him while doing home work. I am tired and stressed when return from work...."* (Sawera).

A respondent shared that:

*"...I don't have money to arrange tutor for my son...."* (Azra Begam).

Field information in this context enumerates similar findings. Respondents agreed that they face difficulty in making the children regular to school due to many reasons. For example, a respondent said that:

*"...children are not listening to me; they are irregular to school and are not interested in their studies..."* (Masooma Bibi).

*"...my daughter's admission has been cancelled as she was irregular to school. Probably it was because of my lack of focus on her, involvement in earning related activities and involving her (the daughter) in household chores...."* (Irum Khan).

## DISCUSSION

There is evidence that children living with lone mothers performs poorly in education. For example, according to a survey conducted by National Survey of Children's Health shows that those children who live with both of their parents are more intelligent and good in studies and academics than those who live with their mothers alone (see also Haynie & South, 2005).

One of the major issues of parental divorce on children has long term effect on educational attainment of children. Divorce affects a child's educational career by disturbing their economic and psychological well-being, relationship with their parents, teachers and friends resulting in gaining lower level of socioeconomic, physical and psychological satisfaction in future. In this regard, also see the studies of Garriga & Härkönen (2009) and Amato & James (2010).

The current study enumerates that divorce significantly disturbs the schooling of the children. In this regard, a research study conducted by Potter reveals that after the divorce between a couple, children start performing poorly in education as compared to their peers belonging to non-divorced families (see Potter, 2010). Gruber (2004) further asserts that children observing and passing from the experience of parental divorce at school level are also vulnerable to perform poorly in higher education. Findings show that there are many reasons behind poor performance whereby lack of aspiration from parents is mentionable. The study of Sun & Li (2002) also indicates that divorced mothers are unable to aspire their children while educating them.

Further, findings of this study enumerates that children of divorced women are vulnerable to poor performance in exam. Such children are unable to get good grades, marks and have worse reading skills. These findings are supported by the studies of Jeynes (2000) and Fagan (2011) further validates the argument that children of divorce parents in particular when children reside with mother post to divorce are vulnerable to poor education performance, for instance, such children get low grade and GPA in exams and have worse reading skills and poor in maths than those children from intact families. Those children whose mothers are divorced achieve fewer marks in

monthly tests and annual exams than children from non divorced families (see for example Shaff, Wolfinger, Jones & Smith, 2008). Further, frequent mobility of divorced mothers is an important contributor to poor educational performance among children of divorced mothers. After divorce of parents, the children move from their house with their mothers which affect the education of the children. Usually adolescent are more affected by the movement from one house to another which brings behavioral, psychological, economic and adjustment issues related to mothers as well as children. Children in such a scenario are affected in two ways e.g. they are affected directly, and are affected by the changes related to their mothers' socio-economic and psychological condition as well (in this regard see Scanlon & Devine, 2001 as well). In addition to it, migration from better school to lower quality schools due to financial crises also results in poor performance among the children of divorce women which is supported by the study of South, Haynie & Bose (2005).

For balanced personality development of children, both mother and father are necessary. Same is the case in education where children who live with parents receive more help in education such as home work help, sharing educational burden, communication with school and solution of other educational problems. However, children living with mothers alone receive less help, their mothers are unable to communicate frequently with school as well as do not have someone to share economic burden leading to poor school performance. These findings are in line with the studies of Sabry (2006) and Jeynes and William (2002).

Children from divorced family usually remain absent which affect their studies than those children from non divorced family (see also Ham, 2003). A research study shows that divorced children have 26 percent higher absentee ratio as compared to children from non-divorced families. This study also shows that keeping children regular at school is one the challenges to women socializing their children in absence of father supported by the study of Evans, Kelley & Wanner (2001).

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that divorced women face many problems while taking care of schooling of their children. Children of divorced women perform poorly in school whereby many socio-economic hurdles are responsible for it. It includes the inability of divorced women to provide an appropriate economic support to their children. As a result, divorced women cannot afford good quality schooling, books, and transport facilities for their children. Further, divorced mothers suffer from socio-psychological problems whereby they are unable to aspire their children while education them. It is also evident that divorced women are vulnerable to frequent residential moves leading inability of their children to settle to one educational institution. Absenteeism and lack of control over children is another core issue faced by divorced mother while educating their children.

## SUGGESTIONS

### **Educational Institutions**

Educational institutions can give admission to children of divorced women and can provide special financial packages to them. Educational institution can provide the talented children of divorced women with scholar ships as well.

### **Employment**

Divorce women should be given priority in employment. There should be specific quota for divorce women in employment. Those divorce women who are educated should be given jobs in government organization and non-governmental organization should also provide them jobs. Further, industrial sector can play an eminent role in providing employment to divorced women which will increase their income and will help in fulfilling the needs of their children. The government or nongovernmental organization should provide them sewing machine and other materials they need for making handicrafts.

### **Policy Makers**

Policy makers have to devise policies to help divorced women and their children in different manners. They should sign child support agreements for divorced women to help them in upbringing their children. The policy makers should provide such remedies to decrease the high level of poverty of divorced women.

### **Financial Assistance Programs for Divorced Women**

Divorced women should be provided financial assistance so they should be able to adjust themselves to the new condition after divorce. Divorced women should be given packages of electricity and gas, and should be given discount in paying electricity bills and gas bills. Further, a specific economic consideration can be given to divorced women in national economic assistance program such as Benazir Income Support Program (BISP).

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