Economic Problems Confronted by Divorced Women and its Impact on their Children

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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 various economic problems faced by divorced women and its impact on their children in Thana, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. This is study is explorative and is framed under qualitative research design. Sampling for the study has been done purposively whereby a total a 25 divorced women having children were sampled. Information from the respondents has been collected through an interview guide and is analyzed thematically. Findings of the study shows that divorced women are confronted with many economic problems which have many adverse impacts on their children. This adverse impact in particular includes inability to meet educational and health related needs of the children.

Key Words: divorce, problems, children, education etc.
1.1. Background of the Study

Different scholars have different views about the causes and consequences of divorce (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Cherlin, 1999). Most studies conclude that divorces have numerous impacts on psychological, physical and socio-economic well-being of individuals as compared to those who did not experience divorce (Amato, 2000; Amato, 2010; Garriga & Härkönen, 2009; Amato & James, 2010). The consequences of divorce are multidimensional both in its nature and on those who are affected (Amato, 2000; 2010; Garriga & Härkönen, 2009).

A financial crisis is one of the immediate impact of divorce for women. In most of cultures, husband is responsible for fulfilling the needs of family, however, after divorce women loses such support. Consequently, women are confronted with financial crises after divorce. Researches show that divorce women while facing financial issues are unable to focus on their children. They have lack of concentration on their children’s education and behavioural development. Further, due to financial crises, divorced women are unable to fulfil the economic needs of the children, for example, meeting their desires, providing them with sufficient pocket money, providing them with better housing, proper clothing etc. (Weis, 2001).

The women after divorce loss a major portion of income from her husband income. Divorced mother losses 25 to 50% of her income after divorce. In 2000, the income of household for divorced mother in USA was 47% to that of married couple household income (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2003). Only 50% of divorced mother have child support agreements while 25% of divorced mother having child support agreement are not given payment. Financial hurdles faced by divorced mother increase her time spending outside the home in working place. After divorce the residence of mother and her child has usually been mal adjusted. Children living with divorced mother are mostly poor as compared to children living in intact families. In 2009, those children who were living with divorced mother were living below poverty line (28%) as compared to children living with both parents (19%) (National Statistics on Divorce, 2011). Nearly 32.2% of children living with divorced mothers were living in poverty by 2009 and remained in poverty for three years while 18.7% of children living with both of their parents remain in poverty for the same time. Those children who are living with divorced mother have lower chances of upward financial mobility (Chetty, Hendren, Kline & Saez, 2014).
1.2. Statement of the Problem

Divorce women confront significant problems with regard to schooling of their children. The most notable among such problems are residential moves, inability to pay school fee leading to transfer to low quality school, inability to help children in home work, to visit to school, inability to pay transport fee and to buy books and meet daily expenses of the children. There 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 (Amato & James, 2010; Haynie & South, 2005; Potter, 2010; Gruber, 2004; Fagan, 2011).

Besides, divorced women are confronted with problems in fulfilling the health related needs of their children. Children include in vulnerable section of human population to various infections as well as require a special care and focus in order to grow normally. This requires better socio-economic conditions; however, divorced women do not live their life in better socio-economic conditions. For instance, they live in poverty, they are stressful and suffer from mental illness and are stigmatized. Consequently, they are unable to provide their children better health facilities and to provide them with appropriate environment and hygienic conditions (CDC, 2011; Amato, 2011).

1.3. Objective of the Study

This study aims to explore the economic problems confronted by divorced women and its impact on their children. The impact particularly includes consequences of upon the education and health of the children.

1.4. Methodology

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.

1.5. Data Analysis

1.5.1. Theme One: Economic Conditions of Divorced Women

One of the major effects of divorce among women is the higher levels of poverty (Callens & Croux, 2009). Poverty among divorced women results in economic distress and economic distress among women is harmful for the children well-being including the social, physical and psychological well-being (McLanahan & Sanderfur, 1994; Cherlin, 1999). Statistically, the study of Finnie (1993) and Galarneau and Sturroch (1997) also conclude that divorce is linked with higher levels of poverty among women. Within two years of divorce 43% of women face a noticeable financial reduction than their married life (Rotermann, 2007). There is an explanation for it, for instance, Economic dependency of women and men during marital life is an important aspect. Generally, women after divorce do not receive economic benefits from the husbands and become
financially distressed. They lack economic support and also face significant problems while taking care of the children (McManus, 2000; Uunk, 2004; Callens & Croux, 2009). Field information in this regard shows similarity to the above literature that divorce is strongly associated with poverty. Divorced women mostly face financial crises after divorce. Field information indicates that divorced women don’t have the economic support which was provided by husband before divorce. For example, a respondent stated that:

“....yes of course I am confronted with economic problems. Actually, in this society it is the responsibility of husbands to provide economic support to wife and children. And when that support ends then women faces significant economic problems....”

Another respondent revealed that:

“....there is no doubt in stating that economic problems prevails are confronted by us (divorced women). It because of the fact that women are not considered to earn money or do any job, and in marital life women are economically supported by their husbands. However, after divorce such support ends and therefore economic problems are certain....”

1.5.2. Theme Two: Consequences of Poor Economic Conditions of Divorced Women on their Children

1.5.2.1. Sub-theme One: Divorced Women and Education of their Children

Considering the economic burden on divorced women, it is evident that divorced women are more vulnerable to financial crises and therefore in many cases they are unable to provide their children with basic needs including food, shelter and clothes. In a similar context, divorced women usually are unable to provide their children with better schooling. Divorced women are unable to pay school fee of their children, to afford the expenses of transport, books, uniform etc. As a result, divorced women are unable to socialize and developed social and psychological well-being of their children (Crow & Crow, 2003).

With regard to financial problems faced by divorced women and its consequences on the education of their children, a respondent argued that:

“....I am facing significant problems regarding the schooling of my kids. My daughter demands for new books, clothes and school bag while I don’t have enough money to provide her with these things. She gets so upset every time when I stop her from demanding such things....”
In addition, economic distress among divorced women is linked with frequent residential moves. Such a situation does not allow them to adjust to an appropriate single environment. Therefore, women suffer from adjustment problems and become careless and less focused regarding the children (Amato, 2010; Sweeney, 2010; Gähler, 1997; Garriga & Härkönen, 2009; Amato & James, 2010). Economic distress among divorce women is associated with feeling of depression, anxiety, loneliness and emotional disorders (Sun and Li, 2002). In this connection, information obtained through field interviews reveals that financial problems or poverty among divorced women is a cause of many problems. First, divorced women frequently changes residences (e.g. due to inability to pay rent); second, it results in stress, depression and carelessness among women. Consequently, their children are affected, for instance, a respondents replied that:

“….I am suffering from continuous headache due to financial problems. I am also informed by the owner of the house that if I am unable to pay the rent by next week then I have to leave the house. This definitely will affect the schooling of my son....”

Another respondent in this regard stated that:

“...since three years I have changed two houses due to inability to pay rent. It significantly affected the schooling of my daughter and son as they have to change the school as well....”

1.5.2.2. Sub-theme Two: Problems Faced by Divorced Women in Fulfilling Health Related Needs of their Children

Children living with divorced mother have poor physical health compared to the children of non divorced children i.e. 22% of divorced parent’s children while 12 % of non-divorced parent children poor health. Children of divorced parents are deprived from health facilities, proper medical check-up and medicines etc. The children of divorced women are neglected and abused double than children living in intact families (CDC/NCHS National Health Interview Survey, 2012).

Researches show that divorced women face many problems while fulfilling the health related needs of their children. First, divorced women often live in poverty which hinders them
to provide the required health facilities to their children. For instance, divorced women are unable to consult a good or a specialist doctor in case of illness to their children because they cannot afford it. They often are unable to buy quality medicine for their children when prescribed by doctor. Further, divorced women face problems while providing hygienic environment and food to their children which make their children vulnerable to many diseases. Second, divorced women suffer from stress, anxiety and depression which makes them unable to provide the needed care to their children. As a result, their children suffer from poor physical and mental health (CDC, 2011; Sun and Li 2001). Field information shows similarity to the mentioned literature that those children who are living with divorced mother are mostly having poor physical health. Divorced women face problems while providing health care to their children which results in weakness and anaemia, having vitamin d deficiency among their children. Divorced women due to financial problems are unable to provide their children with balance diet whereby unbalance and unhealthy diet leads to poor physical health among children. For validation few extracts from interviews are:

“....my children are not drinking water fit for drinking. There are many water tanks in our village; however, I am paying for the cheap one which in my opinion is providing lowest quality of water. I want to pay higher amount for tanks which provide good quality water but I cannot because I cannot afford. The best quality water providing water tanks need about 700 to 800 rupees per month which I cannot afford....”

The respondents also stated that:

“....my son and daughter frequently suffer from stomach upset. I took them to doctor, and after check up he said that it may be due to intake of inappropriate water and food. If this is the reason, I cannot do anything as I do not have enough money to provide them with better food and water....”

A respondent revealed that:

“....yes, my children are having very poor physical health which due to imbalance diet as I cannot afford to provide them with balance diet due to financial problems....”

A respondent explicated that:
“….My son was ill, and doctor prescribed me medicine, however, I bought low quality medicine as I cannot afford to buy the prescribed one....”

“...my children are suffering from anaemia as I cannot afford to provide them with healthy food...”

Another respondent argued that:

“...my daughters have very weak bones and doctor told me to give her healthy food but I can’t even buy milk for her...”

Another extract from an interview is:

“....My daughter is suffering from chest infection for last six or seven months. I have consulted many local doctors but she is not recovering. The infection ends, however returns back after few weeks. Last month the doctor in local emergency advised me to take her to a chest specialist in Peshawar. But, I do not have enough money and I requested my brother to lend me some money....”

1.6. Discussion

Findings of the current study enumerate that divorce women faces financial and income related problems. As a result, they face many difficulties in fulfilling the needs of their children (see also Uunk, 2004 and Callens & Croux, 2009). Divorced women are not able to provide their children with health friendly water and food leading to health problems among their children. Further, divorced women are unable to meet the demands of their children, and to meet the educational and health needs of children due to economic crises. These findings are in line with the study of Amato & James (2010) who argues that divorced women are unable to meet the demands of their children, and to meet the educational and health needs of children due to economic crises. Further, income related problems leads to residential moves among divorced women which also affect the schooling of their children. Divorced women due to economic problems are stressed and cannot focus on their children. These findings are supported by the studies of Callens & Croux (2009), McLanahan & Sanderfur (1994), Crow & Crow (2003) and (Sun and Li, 2002).
1.7. Conclusion

Divorce is one of the growing social problems in modern societies. Pakistan includes in list of countries where divorce rates are gradually increasing. The current study is an effort to explore various economic problems faced by divorced women and its impact on their children. The study has been conducted in District Malakand, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. This is study is explorative and is framed under qualitative research design. Sampling for the study has been done purposively whereby a total a 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.

The collected information indicates that divorced women are confronted with many economic problems whereby low income and poverty is worth to be mentioned. Low income and poverty affects the children of divorced women in many important ways, for instance, Divorced women are not able to provide their children with health friendly water and food leading to health problems among their children. Further, divorced women are unable to meet the demands of their children, and to meet the educational and health needs of children due to economic crises. Income related problems leads to residential moves among divorced women which also affect the schooling of their children. Divorced women due to economic problems are stressed and cannot focus on their children.

References


