

EFFECTS OF PARENTS' DIVORCE ON CHILDREN ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the perceptions of teachers regarding the academic performance of students from divorced and intact families in secondary schools within the Faisalabad district. Utilizing a cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 120 female teachers selected through stratified random sampling from 30 schools (15 public and 15 private). An interview schedule was developed, with its reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.69) and validity ensured through expert consultation. The results reveal that majority of the respondents (58.3%) have not noticed any differences in the academic performance of students from divorce and intact families, 67.5% of teachers did not observe significant academic differences of student concentration. Majority (58.3%) of the teachers stated that children from divorced families struggle more for academic excellence. About half (48.3%) of the teachers reported that they received training on professional development on how effectively worked with the children from divorced families. There is a need to focus more on children from divorced families, as they require additional care and love.

Keywords: Educational Performance, Divorce, Effects, Intact families.

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan's education system consists of primary, secondary, higher secondary, and tertiary levels. Despite compulsory primary education, around 22.8 million children remain out of school. Secondary education quality is uneven, particularly between urban and rural areas. Higher secondary education is criticized for relying on rote learning, while access to tertiary education remains limited due to socioeconomic challenges. Madrassas offer religious education, but their integration into the mainstream system is still debated (Bano, 2007). The different types of education mentioned earlier are not available in all cities of Pakistan. Some educational opportunities are accessible in certain

areas, while in others, students have to relocate to different cities to pursue their education. Some students can afford one level of education, such as secondary education, but may not be able to afford higher education. In many areas, particularly rural regions, almost all children do not attend school or pursue higher education (Ahmad et al., 2014). Various reasons may contribute to this lack of education, including limited resources and lack of interest. Even for students enrolled in schools and educational institutions, their education is affected by several factors, such as resources, customs, culture, and the home environment. Within the home environment, the parental relationship plays an

important role in students' academic performance. Divorce and parental separation are significant factors affecting education in Pakistan (Suleman et al., 2012).

Divorce is becoming increasingly common, with many marriages ending in separation. As a result, numerous children are raised in single-parent households, either with their divorced mother or father, which adversely affects their development. Divorce impacts various aspects of life, requiring children to adjust to changing circumstances. The disruption caused by divorce often makes it difficult for children to cope. In most cases, children are significantly affected, experiencing a loss of parental knowledge, skills, and resources. Additionally, those living with a single parent often face financial difficulties and changes in living conditions, such as moving homes or schools (Khattak et al., 2018).

In 2010, a total of 40,410 divorce cases were reported in Karachi courts. It has been noted that approximately 150 divorce cases are filed daily in Lahore, indicating a high divorce rate in Pakistan. However, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, despite having the highest rate of domestic violence, cases of parental separation and family disintegration are rarely reported, as domestic violence is commonly accepted as part of the culture. Similarly, in rural areas, despite widespread violence, divorce cases are seldom reported or observed (Siddiqui et al., 2021).

In Pakistani society, the family, as a fundamental unit of the socio-cultural system, plays a primary role in the upbringing and socialization of children. However, the rising divorce rate in recent decades has significantly impacted the psychosocial well-being of women and children. In the Pakistani socio-cultural context, divorce and post-divorce adjustment are major challenges for women and children (Qamar and Faizan, 2021). Divorce creates disruption within family life, significantly hindering these objectives and negatively impacting the social lives of both partners, their children, and extended families. Divorce is not considered desirable in any religion, and in Islam, it is particularly discouraged. This is reflected in the significantly lower divorce rate in Islamic communities compared to those of other religions (Ramzan et al., 2018). In Pakistani social circles, divorce or separation is viewed as a

source of shame for the family, causing disruptions among its members. However, this issue is becoming increasingly common due to factors such as a lack of compromise, dominance between spouses, pressure from in-laws, financial difficulties, early marriages, extramarital affairs, forced marriages, and greed (Tariq, 2009). The main reasons for divorce in Pakistani society include short temper, lack of patience, lack of trust, the joint family system, forced marriages, differences in social status, extramarital affairs, and the husband's second marriage (Altaf, 2011). The present study is designed to investigate the impact of divorce on the educational performance of students, particularly those at the secondary school level, as this stage is crucial for determining students' entry into various professional education systems at universities and colleges. At some point in their career, every teacher encounter student from divorced families. Therefore, it is crucial for administrators and teachers to be able to identify these students and understand how to effectively engage with them. This may involve offering kind words, showing extra empathy and attention, and addressing the behavioral, emotional, and mental challenges these students face. Therefore, this study was designed to examine the impact of parental separation on students' academic performance, as well as the efforts made by teachers to support these students.

Methodology

Present study was conducted in District Faisalabad, which was chosen conveniently. The population of the study consisted of all the teachers of secondary schools. A cross-sectional research design was applied to conduct the study. For this purpose, 30 female secondary schools were selected randomly, with 15 from public schools and 15 from private schools. From each school, four teachers were randomly chosen, resulting in a total sample size of 120 female teachers. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure equal representation from both types of institutions. An interview schedule was specifically designed for the objectives of the study, and its reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.69, indicating satisfactory reliability. Validity was established through expert consultation and subsequent amendments. Data were collected by the researcher personally in the

targeted schools, with the purpose of the interview schedule clearly communicated to each respondent prior to completion. After collection, the data were systematically tabulated and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Limitations

- The study was limited to district Faisalabad
- The study was limited to 120 teachers
- Financial limitations were also there for the researcher.
- Little time to achieve the goal for completion of the research in accordance with the schedule of academic session

Results and Discussion

In any research project, data analysis and interpretation are the most crucial aspects. If we exclude this phase, we won't be able to generalize

the results or anticipate future outcomes. This chapter discusses the results and their interpretation.

Academic Performance

Finding out how divorce affects children's academic performance is essential if school counselors, teachers, and parents are to collaborate to assist these at-risk children succeed in school. Concerns concerning the constantly rising proportion of children from divorced homes have been expressed by educators, mental health professionals, researchers, and society at general. Given that schools and instructors are usually held accountable for students' subpar test scores and grades, one wonders what effect changes in family structure may have on students' academic outcomes. In order to identify how to best meet the needs of these children, parents and educators may need to reassess their roles if it is found that rising divorce rates may have an impact on pupils' academic achievement (Ham,2003).

Table 1: Teachers' opinions about any variations in the academic achievement of students from divorced and intact households are distributed often.

Have you noticed any differences in the academic performance of students from divorced and intact families	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	47	39.2
No	70	58.3
Not sure	3	2.5
Total	120	100.

Table 1 indicates based on the responses, it can be inferred that a majority of the respondents (58.3%) have not noticed any differences in the academic performance of students from divorce and intact families, while a significant minority (39.2%) have noticed differences. However, a very small proportion (2.5%) of respondents indicated that they were unsure. It is important to consider that this interpretation is only based students from divorce and intact families. However, a significant

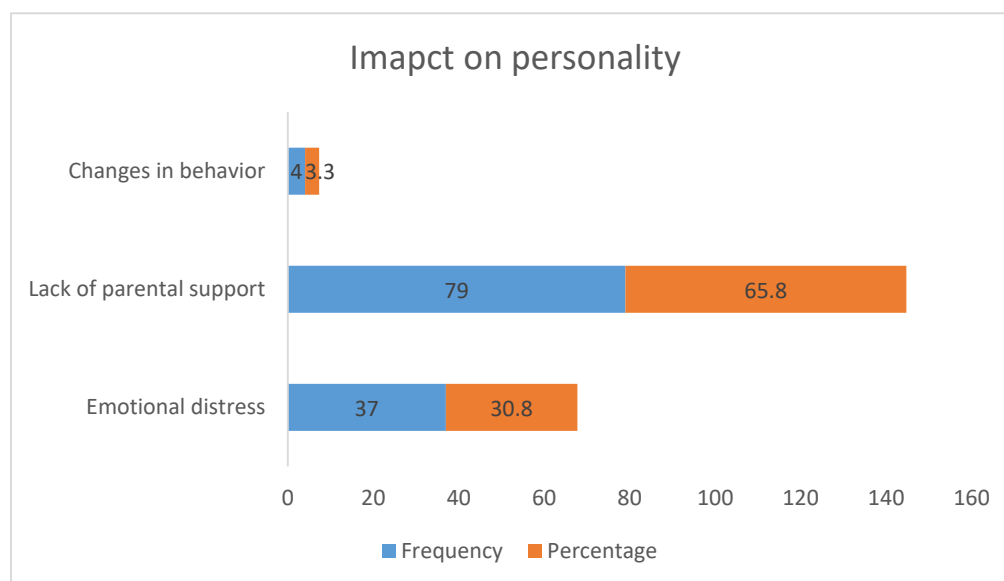
proportion of respondents (39.2%) have noticed differences, indicating that they believe there is a correlation between family structure and academic performance. The small number of respondents (2.5%) who were unsure may suggest a lack of knowledge or experience in the area. Overall, the responses highlight the importance of researching and understanding the impact of family structure on academic outcomes.

Table 2 How often teachers express their opinions about the impact divorce may have on a child's academic achievement.

What effect can divorce have on a child's academic performance	Frequency	Percentage
No effect	29	24.2
Positive effect	45	37.5
Negative effect	46	38.3
Total	120	100.

Table 2 indicates that a significant proportion of the respondents believe divorce might be detrimental to a child's academic performance. This could be interpreted as a concern among the respondents that the emotional stress and instability resulting from divorce can have a detrimental impact on a child's ability to perform well in school. According to 24.2% of the respondent's parental divorce is an independent from the performance of the students. However, it is also noteworthy that a significant

proportion of respondents (37.5%) reported a positive effect, which may suggest that some children may benefit from divorce in certain circumstances, such as when it removes them from an environment of conflict or abuse. Overall, the diverse range of results indicates that a child's academic performance may be impacted by a divorce. can vary based on individual circumstances, and there is no one-size-fits-all answer.



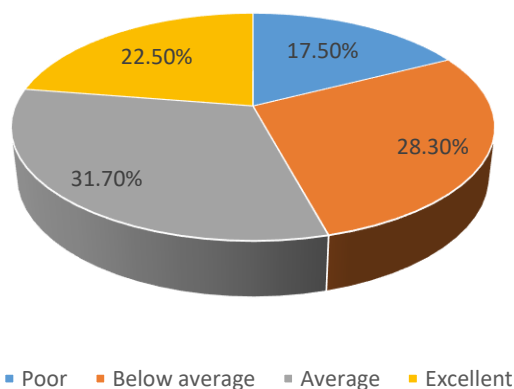
Data indicates that a crucial number of students (30.8%) from divorced families experience emotional distress which may have adverse effect on academic performance. Additionally, a majority of respondents (65.8%) indicated that the lack of parental support is a challenge that has an impact on pupils' academic performance from divorced families. However, only a small percentage of respondents (3.3%) perceived any significant change in behavior among these students. Overall,

the performance. This suggests that emotional support for these students may be crucial in helping them cope with the challenges of their family situation and succeed academically. Additionally, a majority of respondents indicated that lack of parental support is also a challenge for students from divorced families, which further emphasizes the need for supportive relationships and resources for these students. It's crucial to remember that only a small percentage of respondents said they noticed a

change in behavior among students from divorced families, which may suggest that the challenges they face are often internalized and may not be immediately noticeable to others. Overall, the responses highlight the importance of addressing the touching and support needs of students from divorced families in order to promote academic success and well-being. Research conducted by Cherlin (2000) indicates that children of divorced parents are more likely to face psychological, academic, behavioral, and drug-related issues compared to those from intact families. Such disruptive behavior can lead children to act out against teachers, disobey rules, become aggressive, or refuse to participate. While according to Galluzzo (2012) reported that divorce affects the behavior and academic performance of early childhood students,

but the extent of its impact depends on how both the parents and the child respond to the situation, as each divorce is unique. According to Ousman and Bulut (2022), a study conducted in USA and UK reported that when confronted with the changes brought on by divorce, a child may feel emotionally insecure, abandoned, and experience a loss of stability or self-esteem. This can result in rejecting school rules, opposing teachers, and disengaging from school activities. Therefore, it is essential to pay close attention to the child's needs and organize their daily routine based on the fundamental principle of prioritizing the child's best interests. From this, it is evident that the effects of divorce on students' performance and personality are similar across different regions of the world.

Academic performance of students from divorced families



Above data indicates the Teachers' responses to the question, "How would you rate the overall academic performance of students from divorced families in your classroom?" that a notable percentage of respondents (17.5%) perceive the students from divorced families' academic achievement as poor. While there is space for improvement, 28.3% of respondents said the performance was only fair. The largest percentage of respondents (31.7%) rated the

academic performance as average, suggesting that these students to be poor. However, a larger percentage of respondents (28.3%) perceive their academic performance to be average, while a slightly smaller percentage (22.5%) perceives it to be excellent. There does not appear to be a clear consensus regarding the overall academic performance of students from divorced homes in the classroom, according to these differing perceptions.

Table 3 Perceptions of teacher about the students from divorced family

Statement	Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%
Have you noticed any differences in the concentration towards study of students from divorced and intact families?	39	32.5	81	67.5
Children from divorce families have lowers attendance rates in school?	30	25.0	90	75.0
Lower grades or poor performance in certain subjects for students from divorced families	55	45.8	65	54.2
Students from divorced families tends to struggle more academically than their counterparts from intact families.	70	58.3	50	41.7
Home environment plays a role in a student's academic performance	47	39.16	73	60.8
Differences in the behavior or attitude of students from divorced and intact families in the classroom	39	32.5	81	67.5
Received any training or professional development on how to effectively work with students from divorced families.	58	48.3	62	51.7
There is sufficient support available for these students in your school or district	24	20.0	96	80.0

The study found that 67.5% of teachers observed no significant differences in the concentration of students from divorced and intact families, while 32.5% did. Most teachers (75%) also did not see lower attendance rates among students from divorced families. Nearly half (45.8%) noted lower grades in specific subjects, and 58.3% reported general academic struggles for these students, which may be linked to psychological stress. The home environment was considered crucial to academic success by 60.8% of teachers. While 67.5% did not see significant behavioral differences, 32.5% did. Professional development on supporting these students was reported by 48.3% of teachers, and 80% indicated insufficient support systems for students from divorced families. According to Ham (2003), a study conducted in USA showed the similar findings as represented in the above table #3, according to him family structure influences both the grade point average and attendance of high school students, with adolescents from intact families performing better than those from other family arrangements. Interestingly, these effects

were particularly pronounced among females, who were more adversely affected by family structures resulting from divorce compared to males. While a study conducted by Ashenafi and Ayenew (2021) in Ethiopia revealed that Students exhibited higher academic performance prior to their parents' divorce, but no statistically significant difference was observed between genders. It was recommended to provide appropriate care and support to improve the psychological well-being of children, prioritize their needs during and after divorce, and promote co-parenting to enhance their academic performance.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion, divorce poses a significant risk of stress and instability for the child. Schools have a responsibility to intervene to mitigate potential negative consequences. Therefore, continuing education programs should be implemented to raise teachers' awareness and understanding of divorce, equipping them with effective intervention strategies. Additionally, it would be beneficial for

teachers and school counselors to reflect on their personal values and attitudes towards divorce, ensuring their support for children remains unbiased. Beyond its impact on academic success, divorce can create major challenges in the child's daily life, leaving them feeling emotionally insecure, abandoned, and struggling with their sense of identity and self-worth. This may result in rejection of school rules, opposition to teachers, or disengagement from school activities. It is crucial to be attentive to the child's needs and organize their daily life based on the principle of respecting the child's best interests.

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