

Parental Separation and its Relation to Children's Underachievement in Primary School Education

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Abstract

This study aims at investigating the relationship between parental separation (parental divorce) and the underachievement of children in the primary stage. The study sample consists of (100) children from two public schools (Mutah School for Girls and Al-Qurtubi School for Boys), the Institution of Legal Aid and the Family Protection Center. The average includes (50) children suffering from the problem of separation, and (50) live in stable families in Zarqa City in Jordan. The data is collected from several sources: First, the pupils' marks during the preceding two years for all the sample members except the second-grade pupils whose marks of only one year are considered. Second, the data is collected in collaboration with home-room teachers, school records, and special records of the pupils who suffer from separation problems. Third, parents of the target sample group particularly the incubating father or mother after separation to know about their children's educational records. To answer the study questions, arithmetic means and standard deviations are used. The study results reveal that there are differences with statistical significance in achievement between boys and girls in favor of the girls. The study results also show that there are differences with statistical indications between stable family children and separated families in favor of the children of stable families, Furthermore, the results show that there is some linking relation between the pupils' achievement and the secure and safe situation of the families where they live.

(Keywords: Family separation, educational achievement, primary or basic education pupils).

Introduction:

The concept of parental separation/divorce won the interest of a lot of researchers in educational psychology during the last two decades of the last century, It became one of the most studied and discussed topics because of its importance and its effective role in the life of the targeted individuals. Parental separation is regarded as the second reason for mental strain among children after the death

of their parents or one of them. This is reflected in their social behavioral and educational performance especially in the basic stage of their education. Studies indicate that separation alone influence on the success or failure of an individual in his/her school life this needs other concurrent factors such as the intelligence of the child, the financial condition of the separated parents and their educational level, and other factors (Vincent, 2003).

Several studies suggested that family ties that have problems, and lack of understanding between parents, where joint cooperation in the education of the children becomes less, lead to the child's disability in mental, emotional and social aspects, (Frank, 1986,). Keitand Amato (1991) summed up the negative results included in ninety studies conducted on thirteen thousand children. The most prominent results were negative in respect of children's behavior, such as this is aggressive behavior towards father and mother, low level of education achievement. is elue to the emergence of some maladaptation problems, such as: a smooth night, absence of mind, sleep disorders, nightmares, and sense of helplessness. The emergence of psychological conflicts in the middle and late childhood and adolescence, which results in the rejection of life, which sometimes reflects delinquency, drug addiction, or tendenay to suicide. The income level of the parents and family culture is one important factor in separation. The same is stressed by Al-Shahre (2010) in his study carried out on the Saudi society The research had shown that the monthly income of the family of the child, the type of housing and the level of parents' education, are variables that have clear impact on children, and specifically these variables have their impact on the level of their achievement. But the main factor affecting the underachievement among children is the parental separation .

As a result, the topic of the impact of the parental separation on children attracted the attention of many researchers throughout the world at the and of the last century. That is due to the seriousness of the parental separation.

There are not enough scientific studies in this field that my minimize the damage to children and come up with suitable solutions to decrease the possible losses incurred by all parties. In another study carried out by Ismael (2010) on a sample of 200 children, results revealed that:

1. Children who were deprived of their parents because of divorce have many problems with their peers, whereas children, who lost their fathers because of death, scored lower marks in behavioral problems especially with their peers, and

2. Children who are underachievers have problems with their peers, according to the mother and the child alike, and they also have depression because of separation more than children whose achievements are high.

Regarding the stage in which children find it more difficult to adapt to parental divorce, some studies indicated that younger children suffer less, and can deal with it better and fear divorce less than elder children. (www. allerstein, 1984, www. allerstein, Keller, 1980).

On the other hand, some studies suggested that younger children find it more difficult to adapt to divorce than elder ones. Other studies results point out that divorce cases that take place before the child reaches the age of puberty constitute a serious danger to children's emotional and social development in comparison with elder children regardless of the age in which children find it difficult to adapt to divorce (Zell, Morrison, and Cuero, 1993).

Iqbal Mohammed Bashir and Salma Mahmoud Juma (1986) found out that emotional conflict is one of the most important consequences of divorce. This conflict comes from the fact that children are divided between their love for their parents and their inability to side with one of them, (Al Kandari, 2005: 217)

The study of John Robert, et al, (1996) disclosed the relationship between the level of intimacy with parents and the level of the sense of psychological security among adults, and specified the level of the sense of security as a midway between dysfunction and low self-esteem. The study sample consisted of (144) university students.

The results show that there is a relationship between the lack of enjoyment of intimacy with parents and the lack of a sense of security. There is a tendency toward dysfunction, and there is a relationship between dysfunction and the level of low self-esteem. In addition, there is a direct relationship between the low level of self-esteem, and the increase, in the Symptoms of depression and the absence of security leads to the appearance of depression symptoms at the age of puberty (Akraa, 2005:53).

The study of Riahani (1985) SHOWED the effect of parental upbringing on feelings with psychological security. The sample composed of (450) students from middle school in Jordan. The researcher used the test of Maslow for feelings with psychological security. The study concluded that the teenagers who are linked to family's democracy have the feelings of more than their peers who

are linked to authorial families, and that females have the feeling of security more than males (Khweter, 85:2010).

As regard the study of Davis, et al, (1995), high lighted the effect of the destructive conflict between teenagers on the level of psychological security of children and young people through testing the hypotheses of their psychological security. The study was applied to a sample of (112) of children divided into three groups according to their age. The study is made in the state of Virginia in America. The researcher used different tools to measure the psychological security of children and youths in different methods and ways. The results showed that there is relationship between the conflict of teenagers and the feeling of children's insecurity (Khweter, 87:2010).

On contrary, there are studies that referred to the fact that parental separation is regarded as the least loss and the best way for children's psychological health, when the life of the family becomes psychologically insecure and because of elevating and screaming problems.

In a study made by Saleh (2009), she stated that "when the contraction of marriage can not be sared, the good solution, although the most undesirable, is divorce. Sometimes, divorce is better for children than in a family that always have problems. However, children will be benefit from this separation as it may ghonge their lifes , when they go from a family with a father and a mother to a new family with new parents.

Besides, psychological studies show that children who witness their parents' quarrels live the event of their divorce are less affected, whether psychologically or socially, than those who are shocked by the idea of their parents' separation without having any sign(s) that indicate(s) divorce and separation . Here, it is not intende say that a conflict is a healthy thing for the children of parents who intend to divorce. Rather, it the intention to demonstrate that the child is usually ignored in our adult considerations is also an important component in the family and must be acquainted with whatever is related to the case of parents' separation and not to be surprised with its occurrence.

In other words, children who live a troubled family life with their parents which is usually full of insults and disputes, look at divorce as an end of a tragic unpleasant life. Children, who live with families that do not suffer from significant problems, look at divorce as a great tragedy which may affect them and lead them to indulge in serious social and psychological problems.

The most susceptible to these problems are children who refuse sadness and anxiety and hide their feelings and solicitude in a kind of exile justifications. It is difficult to explain the effect of separation on the new-born baby. But this separation may enhance the relationship between a mother

and her baby largely in such a way that hinders the sensual relationship between the baby and his father. Babies of such ages acclimate with such situations because of the absence of their father. They will be more sensitive To the changes in their parents' mood fluctuations such as stress. They may express that in their movements or violence or crying. Such cases can be expressed when babies acquire articulation and become able to speak about their pain.

Age Group classification.

There is some discrepancy about the fact that children behave and react toward their parents' divorce in different ways. That is due to the different capacities of the children as regards their instinctive behaviour and feelings according to their different ages. Preschool children behave in a way different from adolescents. There are differences in the reactions of six-year and nine-year children. Moreover, Its possible to sum-up these differences in the following five groups of childhood: infants, children who learn to walk, kindergarten children, primary school children, late primary school children, and teenagers. The newborn children and infants who learn to walk are less exposed groups to the field study. Thus, the effect of divorce on them is rather little. These studies report that the effect of divorce on a 2-3 year child may adversely affect skills of speech and movement growth as well. Besides, separation after this age makes the child confident to deal with one parent who stays with them, but they cautiously and inattentionally deal with the other parent. During advanced ages, children try to play different roles due to their parents' manners. So, they sometimes try to play the role of mediation, or messengers, or trustful friends of the parent who is near to them. They often hate and scorn the other parent because they biased toward one parent only. Sometimes, they feel as if they were the men of their families replacing their absent fathers. Some other times they regard themselves as observers and/or savers.

Review of Previous Studies

Previous studies of parental separation tackle the topic of educational deficiency and its relation with such variables as academic achievement, child intelligence, financial situation of the family, and the educational levels of parents.

Parental separation may be one affecting, factor on the above mentioned variables. In other studies, the topic of parental separation is studied on the base that it comes as a result of such variables as maltreatment, exile, and styles of upbringing. This study is devoted to tackle the last variable as one of the most variable which are strongly affected by parental separation.

As regards the studies of parental separation, they aim at knowing its effect on each of juvenile delinquency, self-evaluation, and exile. Here appears the difference between such studies and the recent one which focuses on the effect of divorce on children as concerns their academic achievement during the early stages of their basic education. That is due to the importance of these stages along their life.

The previous studies investigate the topic of divorce and self-security separately. They study the effect of self-security on one individual's behaviour on the one hand, and on individuals' in general, on the other hand. However, this study comes to deal with the topic of the academic achievement of the children of intermediate educational stage, in particular.

Studies differ in their selection of samples. They concentrate on adults. Some of them study three stages during the time of childhood to youth. Some others limit their samples to children who are under 15 years. However, the third group of studies chooses pupils of the basic stage of education as their samples, and this is what goes with the scope of this study.

The study puts the following questions:

In her study entitled with 'A Psychological Social Study of Some Children Who are Deprived of Parental Care and Live in Houses of Social Care', Bin Mustafa (2000) concludes that there are definite statistical differences between the means/averages of the male and female children who are deprived of care.

In another study for Al-Hussein (2002) entitled with 'The Martial Agreement/Harmony and its Relation to Melancholy and other Variables', it is found that children of inharmonious families stumble in their psychological, emotional and academic coordination.

In accordance of the above mentioned studies, it seems that one individual's success and academic superiority depends on many cultural, social, psychological, and health factors. However, emotions are regarded as one main factor.

Problem of the Study

The problem of the study is represented in discovering the close relation between parental separation and its effect on the deficiency of the academic achievement/level of children at the basic stage in the schools of Al-Zarqa Governorate. It descends from the importance of the subject and its reality in our life where we witness obvious increase in the number of divorced couples, and collapse of families in addition to some more material and moral losses of all family members. This is the

start point of the research problem. That is due to the feeling of the researchers toward the necessity of paying enough attention to the children of such dismembered families so as to diminish such expected losses that affect the general behaviour of their children, and create difficulties in their schools and institutions (Wallace and Gerald, 1986)

Thus, the problem of the study is limited to the answers of the following questions:

- 1: Is there any effect on the children' academic achievement by the social status of their parents (whether or not their parents are separated)?
- 2: Is the effect of the social status of parents (whether separated or not) on their children' academic achievement different because of the difference of their genders?

To answer such questions, the researchers put the following hypotheses:

- 1: There are differences with statistical indicators in the children's academic achievement. That is due to the interaction of their genders and the social status of their parents (whether separated or not).

Importance of the Study

The importance of this study may emerge from two aspects, the first is the theoretical importance and the second is scientific. The theoretical importance of the study is the modernity of its subject and the need to investigate it to add new results of scientific knowledge. Thus, the theoretical importance of this study emerges from the fact it tries to discover the extent of the effect of parent's separation on their children' achievement. It also aims at showing the extent of its relation to their social and psychological skills. The statistics of Registry Office of Civil Status and Passports indicate that the number of separated families is increasing among couples whose ages range between 20-29 years with a percent of 25.9%, and the separation of wives of 20-24 years old excels 28.4%.

Official reports document that 3916 twenty-year wives were divorced last year (<http://sa.khaberni.com/print.php?newsid=11015@catid=1@comments=true>).

As a result, it seems that divorce is not an individual problem related to couples of parents. Rather, it is a social problem that leads to great dangers and serious social damages. This study provides solutions to prevent or at least to minimize the losses caused by the problem of parental separation.

As regards the practical importance of this study, it emerges from two matters: introducing the educational factors that relate to the states of such students to decision-makers, and awaking the local society to consider and pay attention to such students, and not to maltreat them neither in speech nor in hard looks, since they do not decide/choose their fates which are, rather, imposed on them.

In their recommendations, some researchers point out the importance of studying such a problem. For example, in a study made by a number of Kuwaiti researchers entitled with '*The Phenomenon of Divorce in the Kuwaiti Society: Its Reasons and Effect*', they recommend the following:

1. Providing consultations to whoever concerned in order to get use of them in guiding students of universities in such a way that enhances patterns, styles and manner of their secure connection and help to improve the guidance programs that aim at changing their insecure manners.
2. In general, the studies on the effect of parental separation on their educational and academic achievements in the Arab World are relatively little, as the two researchers think. As so, this study may prime for other attempts of study in this very field.
3. Enlightening those who intend to get married of the responsibilities, rights and duties of husbands and wives that protect their marital life.

In his study entitled with '*The Reasons of the Emotional Marriage of Iraqi Families According to Certain Variables*', the Iraqi researcher Anwar Majeed Hadi (re)commends that:

1. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education decides to teach 'Martial Guidance' as an academic course in all faculties.
2. The Ministry of Justice adopts the idea of organizing special programs of martial guidance to those who intend to get married. Success in such programs should be an obligatory condition of any martial contract.
3. The Ministry of Media concentrates on the readable, auditory and visual media, and introduces programs of martial guidance by specialized experts.

Definitions

- Parental Divorce/Separation: To be free of the martial contract and for a wife to get rid of her husband immaculacy.

- Deficiency of Academic Achievement: Low level of academic achievement or acquisition of a student's one or more academic subjects because of different reasons related to the student himself of his familial, social and/or studious circumstances.
- Psychological Security: It is the psychological and emotional tranquility of every individual. It is the state of complete satisfaction of needs with no danger. Such a kind of security is a real motive for an individual to realize his secure life. It is closely related with the instinct of **standing** on one's existence (Zahran, 1989).

Limitation of the Study

The study applies to a sample of children who suffer from this problem. The sample is taken from The Centre of Lawful Aid, The Centre of Martial Protection, and two governmental schools in Al-Zarqa Governorate in Jordan. The generalization of the results will be limited to the society of the study and any other similar societies.

The Society and Sample of the Study

The society of the study includes children who suffer from this problem. The two researchers collect such children from some governmental schools in Al-Zarqa such as: Qurtubi School, The Primary School of Mu'ta, and samples of centres such as: The Centre of Lawful Aid, and The Centre of Martial Protection. The total number of the sample is 50 children divided according to the variables of the study, as shown in Table 1. Below:

Age	Males	Females	Total
8-6	13	12	25
12-9	12	13	25
Total	25	25	50

Table1.

Distribution of the Study Society According to the Variables of
Age and Social Race

Sample of the Study

The sample of the study contains 100 children divided in the following way: 50 children chosen intentionally from the three places of The Centre of Lawful Aid, and The Centre of Martial Protection and the two governmental schools, which take care of such children with the average of 25 male and 25 female children. As for the arbitrary sample, it includes 50 children of both genders and similar ages and social race. But they have different familial circumstances. The second is the comparative group to the first one.

Procedures of the Study

The researchers start their work as follows:

1. They get the lists of children inside their schools with the cooperation between the researchers and the teachers of the first six classes so as to separate the cases inside classes and then to return to the marks of the first-year students during the last two or one and a half years. This helps to compare marks of two stages or classes.
2. With the cooperation of The Centre of Lawful Aid, and The Centre of Martial Protection, some intended samples of children, who suffer from the problems of parental separation and weak familial ties, are taken. Referring to their nestling parent, there seems that they suffer from poor academic achievement because their nestling parents are busy of earning living and because children themselves are unwilling to study and cooperate with their teachers. They pretend to be tired, lazy or sleepy, and so on. Table 2 shows the distribution of the study sample according to the variables of separation and gender. The researchers apply the following tools for the purpose of collecting results; they use data related to the lists of second-year (for only one year), third-year and fourth-year /for two years) and first-year (for one year) students. After getting the necessary programs of collecting data, the researchers intend to limit the numbers of the sample to 100 male and female students during March and. A statistical approach is applied so as to document, computerize and analyze the data.

Gender	Suffering from family problems	Stable family affair	total
Male	25	25	50
Female	25	25	50
Total	50	50	100

Table 2.

Distribution of the Study Sample According to the
Separation and Gender

Variables of

Tools of the Study

They apply the program of the statistical clusters (spss) to such data together with the use of two variables of gender and achievement. For accurate results, they consider of the (T) test for the separated samples. And then, they conclude the results.

Results in Accordance with the Study Hypotheses

Variables of the study: For the purpose of statistical analysis, the researchers use two variables: Gender, and educational..

Question No1. Is there any effect of social state of both parents (whether separated or not) on the aducational achievement of their children? To answer such a question, the mathematical mean, the standard deviation, and the (T) test are **cal**, as shown in Table 3.

Social state	Mathematical Mean	Standard Deviation	T	level of Statistical Indication
Non-separated	80.72	6.43	11.42	0
separated	59.60	11.75		

Table 3.

Results of (T) Test Regarding Effect of the Social States of Parents on their Children aducational Achievement

As seen in the table, there are differences with statistical indications of less than (0.05) in the children's achievement due to different social states of parents, and this is, of course, for the children whose parents are not separated. The mathematical mean of such a group of children is (80.72) as compared to (59.60) for the children whose parents are separated. These rules show that the first hypothesis is true, i.e., the inferiority of the aducational achievement of the separated parents' children.

The second question: Does the effect of social states of parents on their children achievement differ according to gender?

Source	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Average squares	Value(f)	Significance level
Gender	3364.00	1	3364.000	51.180	0.000
Social state	115151.360	1	115151.360	169.658	0.000
The reaction between sex and social static	924.160	1	924.160	14.060	0.000
error	6309.920	96	65.728		

Table 4. The Results of the Analysis of Dual Difference of the Effect of the Social States of Parents on Their Children's Achievement According to Gender

As seen in the table, there is some effect of the interaction between gender and social states of parents on the achievement of their children with (0.05) percent for female children.

Table 5. The Mathematical Mean of the Interaction between Gender and States

Social state-gender	Mathematical Mean	Standard deviation	Number
Male from inspirable family	77.96	5.734	25
Male from separated family	50.76	9.198	25
Total	64.36	15.693	50
female from inspirable family	83.48	5.973	25
female from separated family	68.44	10.476	25
Total	75.96	11.355	50

The table shows that the mathematical

mean of the female achievement is (75.96) as compared to that of (64.36) for male children.

Conclusion 8

This study aims to know the level of the academic achievement of separated families' children. It is intended to find whether or not there are differences in the level of this achievement because of the independent variable, i.e., their parents' separation. One more aim of the study is to know the variable of gender and the parental cognition to the topic of divorce. The results are discussed in accordance with their question in the following way:

Conclusion 8 to the First Question

The results of the study showed three differences with statistical indications at the level of ($\alpha=0.5$) of the educational achievement of the separated families' children and the children of normal families as well. These differences are appropriate to the children of normal families. The reason for the educational deficiency of the children of separated families is due to the nature of their life which affects the children's aspects of feelings and emotions, modification and achievement. One other reason may refer to the nature of the parents' maturity that may help them deal with such a problem in a proper way, and realize the size and danger of such a situation. The parents' culture and

education influence their children attitudes and behaviour. Closely related is the negative social view toward such a group or sector of people.

The results of this study is in harmony with those of the other study which concludes that divorce that takes place before a child reaches adolescent is regarded very dangerous and highly affects his emotional and social growth as compared with other elder children (Zill, Moreison and Kouero, 1993).

This study also has some common grounds with Al-Shari' study (2010) on the Saudi society 'A Comparative Survey'. Its results showed that the monthly income of the child's family, type of residence, and the educational level of his parents are variables of great effect on children of such families. The study concluded that such variables directly affect the educational levels of children. However, the most influential factor that causes educational deficiency of children is their parents' divorce.

This study is in harmony with part of Ismael's study (2010) The sample of that study consisted of 200 children. This study also agrees with the results of other studies all of which refer the fact that divorce states which happen before children's adolescence as a great and real danger against the emotional and social development of children as compared with elder peers (Zill, Moreison and Kouero, 1993) regardless of their age suffering from the difficulty of adapting to the state of divorce.

On contrary, this study differs from the study of Salih (2009). The main difference is that the researchers of this study find that children, who live with disturbed families and parents, regard divorce as a tragic end and a relief at the same time. As regards children who live with families that have no real problems look at divorce as a tragedy or rather a catastrophe that causes them serious psychological and social problems. Children who refuse sorrow and worry and justify their concerns and feelings with many vindications are the ones who are exposed to such problems more than others.

Discussing the Results Related to the Second Question

The results of this study show that there are three differences with statistical indications at the level of ($\alpha=0.5$) of the aducational achievement of male and female children. These differences for the female children. The reason of the male children's aducational achievement may refer to the nature of their life. That is they sometimes work for a long time so as to earn living and help their families because of the absence of their fathers' economical role. One other reason may be the weak control of the **brooder (mostly common their mothers)** on the male children especially in the beginning of their adolescence. One more reason is the absence of the monitoring role of parents toward their children because they are busy earning theie living.

This study agrees with the conclusion of Al-Raihani study (1985) which points out some differences between the educational achievement of each of male and female children for the females. Al-Raihani study aimed at knowing the types of parental upbringing in accordance with the feeling of psychological security. The results of the study showed that the adolescents who belong to democratic families feel psychologically secure more than their peers who live with dominating families, and that girls feel more secure than boys (Khwaitir, 2005).

This study opposes the conclusions of Basheer and Juma's study (1986) which referred to divorce as the most influential effect on the emotional conflict of children's love to each of their parents and their disability to align themselves to either of their parents (Kundari, 2005: 217). That study concluded that there are no statistical differences between the male and female genders as regards their psychological security.

As regards this topic, this study is in contrary with the study of Ismael (2010). concerning the stage during which children face difficulty in adopting To

their parents' divorce, studies find that young children suffer less, manage better and fear divorce less than their elder peers (Wallerstein 1984, Wallerstein, Keller 1984).

Recommendations

In accordance with the conclusions of this study, the researchers recommends the following:

1. Establishing training programs supervised by specialized experts of parental guidance. The aim of such programs is to change the behaviours of parents toward their children.
2. Making more and more studies and researches on the topic of parental separation and divorce cases, and the effect of such cases on children in addition to some new topics in this field.

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