



LIFESPAN ISSUES

STUDIES ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING
FROM EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Edited by

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STUDIES ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING
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This book is a collection of empirical studies in Educational Psychology and Counseling. It generally focuses on three major themes namely: Aspects of psychological well-being, happiness and life satisfaction. Studies on adolescents' and adults' psychological well-being, happiness and life satisfaction were examined. This book shares findings from studies which are qualitative and quantitative by nature. The readers will find the chapters which discuss findings related to the psychological well-being and life satisfaction across the lifespan. It starts with the exploration of the deeper meaning of psychological well-being, happiness and life satisfaction, as well as the relationship between them. The importance of Islamic perspectives on these issues was also discussed. The biggest portion discusses adolescents' developmental issues namely: Self, personality, social, moral and spiritual competency, IQ and school achievement, coping with peer pressure, dying and death.

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Chapter 7

Parental Divorce and Its Effects on the Psychological Well-Being of Children

Daisy Jibaan Corpin Orcullo and Nik Ahmad Hisbani Ismail

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of research and literature on parental divorce and its effects on the well-being of children. Effects of divorce are divided into two categories: 1) The internalising effects; and 2) The externalising effects. Internalising effects involve the emotional issues, while the externalising effects involve the behavioural issues. It begins with a discussion of the theoretical basis of the children's experiences of parental divorce, followed by the discussion of marriage and divorce in Islam. It ends with the discussion of the psychological effects of divorce on children, highlighting gender differences in those psychological experiences. Children's experiences on parental divorce are explained by two main theories. These are the family systems theory and the attachment theory.

7.2 Family Systems Theory

The family systems theory, developed by Murray Bowen in the 60s, into a theory of human behaviour emphasises the view that the family is an emotional unit, and that its members are intensely connected emotionally. It also emphasises that family members are profoundly affected with each other's thoughts, feelings, and actions which makes the function of family members interdependent (Anderson & Sabatelli, 1999). The family systems theory has become one of the major theoretical foundations guiding empirical investigations into the study of families and from which clinical interventions and programmatic work with families are developed

(Anderson & Sabatelli, 1999). As a system theory, it stresses that change in one component of the system affects all the other components of the system.

The reciprocal influence of the members of a family system means that a dysfunctional family would also make its members dysfunctional. It means that a family member cannot be isolated from other members of the family. Because it is as an emotional unit, each member of the family has his/her own roles to play, and rules to respect. All members are expected to respond to each other in a certain way according to their role. The theory further stressed that once the family members have developed and maintained a pattern of behaviour, there is a balance in the family system. This, however, may also lead to dysfunction. An example provided by this theory is if the husband is depressive and cannot pull himself together, the wife may need to take up some responsibilities. In this case, there will be changes in roles and to maintain stability in the relationship, the family may be pushed towards a different equilibrium, which may also lead to dysfunction (Bowen, 2001).

Saponek (2004) explained that, in a nuclear family, the emotional system of a child and marital problems assume a unidirectional cause-effect relationship. It is presumed that dysfunctional marital relationships cause dysfunctional behaviour patterns in children.

Theoretically, there are eight interlocking concepts in Bowen's theory. In this study, the nuclear family emotional system which defines four relationship patterns where problems may develop in a family includes marital conflict, dysfunction in one spouse, impairment of one or more children, and the emotional distance. This system described that if marital conflict arises family members including children get anxious. As anxiety goes up the emotional connectedness of family members becomes more stressful than comforting. In the case of marital break-up, children are the most affected (Amato, 2004) and as they accommodate and absorb the anxiety they become most vulnerable to either emotional or behavioural problems.

From the above discussion, the theory on family system relates to the present study. As children disclosed how they are affected by their parents' divorce they are literally the absorber of the problem and their behaviours are totally affected by their emotions.

7.3 Attachment Theory

The attachment theory is a model advanced by the collaborative efforts of Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1977, 1980) and Ainsworth (1989; Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). In their collaborative efforts, these authors have

attempted to develop a theory to explicate the functional and healthy lifelong development grounded in the quality of the parental attachment relationship (Bretherton, 1995).

In Bowlby's work, he clearly delineated the varied trajectories that the child may experience as a result of separation, deprivation, and loss. Moreover, it is evident in his early writings to hypothesize that intergenerational transmission of attachments relationships, when he further stressed that future security, well-being, and positive relationships in adulthood are often contingent on the secure mother-child relationship and the internal working models experienced and produced during infancy and childhood. Therefore, if maternal deprivation, loss, or separation occurs, the outcome can be devastating for the child.

Meanwhile, Kosslyn and Rosenberg (2006) explained attachment as an emotional bond that leads us to want to be with someone and to miss him or her when we are separated. The tendency to form such an emotional bond begins during infancy, when normal infants become attached to their primary caregivers.

The attachment theory is based on the idea that the capacity to love and be loved is an aspect of human nature that evolved because our species would not otherwise survived. The fact that we are all born with an attachment system motivates us to develop survival-enhancing bonds, but it cannot guarantee the formation of such bonds, nor can it ensure that the bonds will be of optimal quality.

Similarly, we feel love for the individuals who are our primary sources of affection, protection, and care. We rely on them to make our welfare a priority and to be available to us when needed. They make us feel safe, and we are distressed by prolonged separation from them. The prototype of this form is a child's love for a parent.

Bowlby (1973) has this to say: "The more securely attached a person is, the more confident he or she is to explore and master a new environment" (Ainsworth, 1989; Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975). This attachment is also thought to promote emotional regulation, such that a person is able to manage anxiety, depression, and anger during periods of stress and when others are temporarily unavailable (Kobak, Cole, Ferenz-Gillies, Fleming, & Gamble, 1993; Lopez & Brennan, 2000).

On the other hand, Ainsworth's (1989; Ainsworth *et al.*, 1978) contributions were also significant in moving the attachment theory forward. Ainsworth has been credited with providing empirical support for Bowlby's attachment theory and extending the theory. The attachment theory and

its associated patterns gained empirical support after Ainsworth created an objective method to observe and measure attachment in infants.

To provide more insights on the attachment theory, Marotta (2002) stated that, the attachment theory also provides a useful framework for understanding the impact of neglect and the potential for negative and positive outcomes. Thus, Bowlby (1998), in his descriptions of the function of attachment behaviours, serve to protect the young from danger. This theory proposed that the infant's relationship with the primary caregiver is the prototype for subsequent relationships. Bowlby further stressed (1973), that attachment style that develops in the infant-caregiver relationship influences future relationships. These early experiences with a primary caregiver become psychologically internalised as a mental representation or internal working model of relationships. And, by the time the person reaches adolescence, early patterns or interaction with attachment figures become organised into generalised interactional styles that are driven by the person's internal working model.

Several researchers have explored the adult's current internal working models as related to childhood attachments (Pearson, Cohn, Cowan, & Cowan, 1994). Findings of the study suggest that those who experience poor parenting and are classified as insecurely attached are not fared to follow this interaction style forever. In other words, researchers have admitted readily the feasibility of an 'earned secure' attachments style later in development, given the right conditions (Pearson *et al.*, 1994). He further stressed that the extent of one's resilience in the face of stressful life events is determined significantly by the attachment style developed during childhood.

One significant issue to mention in this theory is that researchers and attachment theorists understand that current adult attachment style classification are derived from the way the person describes and currently interprets his or her childhood experiences. Indeed, the linkage and continuity between child and adult attachment styles are undeniable (Belsky, 1993; Bowlby, 1997; Cowan Cohn, Cowan, & Pearson, 1996; Karen, 1990; Lopez & Brennan, 2000; Walters *et al.*, 2000).

In some cases where maltreatment occurs in the family, Bowlby (1998) commented that, often the parent is unresponsive to the cues demonstrated by the child, hence, when the child is anxious, the parent often does not serve as a secure base. In turn, the child's feelings of anxiety and distress are increased, exacerbated, and continually experienced because of the parents' suboptimal behaviour or neglect (Gold, 2001). Most of these cases, the environment and the parent who is the attachment figure serve as a force

that inhibits the secure base and the attachment process (Liotri, 1999). In sum, the attachment theory, which has a lifespan perspective, informs how a person has dealt or is dealing with the past experiences that have relevance to the present.

Brown (*et al.*, 1993), Parke and Ladd (1992) similarly claimed that despite adolescents' increasing independence, parents continue to play an important role in their social and emotional adjustment. Early research on parental attachment has convincingly shown that children internalise the experiences with their parents into internal working models that direct their actions in social situations outside the family (Ainsworth *et al.*, 1978; Bowlby, 1982). In addition, more research showed that a safe, secure, and supportive family background is related to adolescents' quality of relationships with friends and intimate partners and emotional adjustment (Rice, 1990).

Meanwhile, Rurger (2001) also noted that, parental attachment contributed positively to self-esteem and life satisfaction and negatively to measures of depression, anxiety, and feelings of alienation. Hence, parental attachment appears to enhance adolescents' well-being by increasing their self-esteem and diminishing feelings of depression.

7.4 Marital Conflict and Divorce

Both family systems and attachment theories explained the importance of emotional relationship established within the family. The family systems theory describes the interdependence of each member and how the component of the system affects the other components. It means that if the family becomes dysfunctional, there is a great tendency for its members to also be dysfunctional. Meanwhile, attachment theory defines the emotional bonding established by the caregiver and the child. Hence, in the event that family relationships are shattered or disrupted such harmonious relationships are threatened.

Like marital conflict and divorce which constitute major impediments to the adjustment of children of all ages, its 50 per cent increased rates reflect a societal acceptance of divorce. Studies suggest that nearly one million children experience divorces each year. It was indicated that in the year 2000, one out of four children live in stepfamilies and half of all children lived in single-parent families (Jaffe, 1991).

Experience of divorce from a child's point of view looks and feels more like a succession of painful experiences (Hetherington, 1989; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). Kalter (1987) propose that children experience a series of

stressors when their parents' divorce. With this, Wallerstein (1988) describes three stages of divorce, all of which affect children's ability to focus on their developmental tasks:

- A. The acute phase is characterised by parental fighting, conflict, anger, depression, and the actual separation, which is often not mutual. This phase extends from months to over a year and is particularly difficult for children because they witness arguments and must live amidst household instability and parental neglect.
- B. The second phase is described as the transitional phase - in which parents and children try to adjust to their new life in a restructured family. The transitional phase usually lasts several years before the family settles into new roles and routines.
- C. The third phase is the stabilising phase, where the family has typically adapted to the shifts in roles and allegiances. An optimal level of functioning is regained, and the family has moved on to tackle new changes. Not every family experiences each of these stages, however. Individual family members will vary in the level of functioning they achieve post-divorce.

Indeed, divorce is taxing for children as it disrupts one of the core relationships in their lives and dissolves the family structure they depend on for secure development (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). More often than not, children of divorce face adjustment issues throughout the course of their lives. As is true of the divorce process, the stresses evoked by divorce are not time-limited and will resurface in different forms as children develop. Although research has cited marital conflict as contributing more to children's distress than the actual divorce (Long & Forhand, 1987), many factors have been identified as determinants of children's adjustment (Kalter, Kloner, Schreier, & Okla, 1989). These factors include the personality and temperament of the child, the quality of the parent-child relationship over post-divorce, stability of the custodial parents' household, financial security, and the post-divorce relationship between ex-spouses (Hetherington, 1989; Wallerstein, 1988).

7.5 The Effects of Divorce on Children

The remarkably high rate of divorce cases has understandably elevated concern over the effects of parental divorce on child well-being (Amato, 2000 cited by Segrin *et al.*, 2005). Now, it is apparent that parental divorce is associated

with some negative psychosocial effects on offspring both during childhood (Amato & Keith, 1991) and as they progress into adulthood (Amato, 1999; Amato & Keith, 1991).

Looking into the various researchers' findings of their studies on the effects of divorce, most of them contends that children exhibit more behavioural and emotional problems, more social difficulties, lower academic achievement, poorer adjustment, vulnerable to depression and other psychological disorders (Amato, 1994; Deryn, 1994; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Stanley-Hagan, 2002; and Harvey & Fine, 2004), though its effect varies from one child to another (Wallerstein, 1983).

Fine (1983) presented five variables that play a role in the effects of divorce on children. These are pre-divorce family condition; pre-divorce child adjustment; post-divorce parental relationship; age of the child at the time of the divorce; and the divorce related to socioeconomic changes. Meanwhile, Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) indicated that, most of the effects of divorce can be observed within one year after the separation.

Moreover, Hetherington (1994) claimed that children who experienced parental divorce have a constellation of emotions such as feelings of abandonment, psychological dysfunction, and immense anger are about a few of the overwhelming feelings children experience. The findings of this present study have proven to these overwhelming impacts that children have on parental divorce.

Insensitivity of parents leads them to be unaware that their children are suffering the most from marital problems. Some of these children are in traumatic condition, stressed and anguished. Rage is usually the first to manifest in a child, causing them to feel despair, hopeless, and lost when the children suffer such a devastating personal loss with the divorce of their parents. On the other hand, depression and the erosion of self-esteem is also at stake. And this traumatic experience in children can produce oppressive feelings of sadness, recurring anger, self-blame, and even violence.

A study conducted by the department of Health and Human Services in the late 1990's concluded that: "Children under the age of 18 suffer 40 per cent more anxiety as a result of their parents' divorce and that rate is doubled if the parent divorces multiple times". Meason (1990) stated that, as children respond to stressful situations in a variety of ways, some of these cases are violent acts, but other times, they are guarded and silent, and in rare cases, they disclosed on how they really feel.

Although researches on the impact of divorce on families has shown it to have an overall detrimental effect on the adjustment of children, adolescents,

and young adults alike (Amaro & Booth, 1991; Amaro & Keith, 1991) investigations of divorce and other family variables, such as conflict and parent-child relations, indicate that, the impact of divorce is not inevitably negative, which reinforces a view that a range of family variables must be examined when studying the effects of divorce (Mechanic & Hansell, 1989; Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbusch, 1991).

Thus, this research aimed to examine the impact of parental divorce during adolescence on young adult adjustment, in which the authors took into consideration the levels of interparental conflict during adolescence and current relationship with their parents. In the same opinion with Meason (2004), Chase-Landsdale, Chertin, & Kiernan, (1995); Wallerstein & Kelly (1980) have found out that the reactions children and adolescents have to their parent's divorce differ qualitatively. And Hartly (1992); Wright & Maxwell (1991) have postulated that, this difference is possibly due to cognitive maturity on adolescent children. However, this cognitive maturity may lead parents to rely on their adolescent children to bear the responsibilities and provide them the support.

Daniels (1990) commented that, it is important to examine the impact of family disruption during adolescence as this is the developmental period that has been viewed as one in which children are particularly vulnerable. Further commented by Aquilino (1997) that, at the adolescence stage the person begins to form a sense of self, seeks to develop more mature relationships either with peers or family, and most importantly seeks independence. Moreover, as late adolescents and early adulthood is the time of various transitions such as completing school, starting a college education, leaving home, and experiencing a dissolution of former peer groups (Cooney, 1988). Thus, situations like parental divorce are just an added stressor and has a great impact on the adjustment problem of children (Dunlop & Burns, 1995).

Kot (1999) postulated that, when investigating the impact of divorce, it is significant to take other family variables into account. And one of these to be taken into consideration when examining the impact of parental divorce is the relationship between young adults and their parents. Buchanan *et al.*, 1991; Burns & Dunlop, 1998; Forhenad & Mc Vicar, 1993 in their researches indicated that a positive parent-relationship can act as a safeguard against the impact that divorce and parental conflict have on adjustment. In other studies, young adults from divorced families reported more stressful family relations and less intimacy with their parents, in particular the father (Fine, Moreland, & Schwebel, 1993; Wigle, 1985). Generally, the literature

indicates that adolescents and young adults from divorced families with positive parent-child relationships report better psychological and social adjustment than do those with poor parent-child relationships (Burns & Dunlop, 1998; Cooney & Kurz, 1996; Grossman & Rowat, 1995; Hess & Camaras, 1979).

In a relative form, research indicates that the parent-child relationship is negatively influenced by divorce. While findings regarding the impact of divorce or conflict on the mother-child relationship has been mixed (Amaro, 1986; Amaro & Booth, 1996; Cooney & Kurz, 1996; Osborne & Finchman, 1996) there appears to be a general consensus that divorce negatively influences the father - child relationship for both males and females children (Amaro, 1986; Amaro & Booth, 1996; Cooney & Kruz, 1996; Rodgers, 1996).

Such findings could be due to the fact that a majority of the children following divorce live with their mothers rather than with their fathers. The departure of the father from the family home may result in less contact and a deterioration of the father-child relationship (Osborne & Finchman, 1996). In the majority of divorce cases, children remain with their mother (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982) with the attachment with the father potentially becoming more distant, if not totally absent (Abbey & Dallos, 2004).

The discussion above pointed out to the current study in which for most of the participants, aside from living with their mothers, also confided their feelings to their mothers.

Findings of numerous researches on parental divorce proved the fact that indeed it is damaging to children's psychological well-being. Psychological well-being includes emotional instability and behavioural problems. The next section presents the various emotional problems that children experienced on parental divorce. Next to it are the behavioural problems that children go through after the parents ended their marital relationship wherein children are always the left unattended.

7.6 Emotional Issues

In most cases of divorce, not only parents are affected, but also the children. Children are traumatised upon witnessing that the family structures they know they belong to have shattered with the decision of parents to separate or divorce. Numerous studies were conducted on how divorce affects the child. Family dissolution negatively affects the children's psychological well-being,

cognitive development, social adjustment, relations to parents, physical health, and school achievement (Amaro & Keith, 1991).

In any case, we should not underestimate the trauma that most children go through when their parents divorce. After a divorce, children may exhibit depression and anxiety. Subsequently, research shows that for all children regardless of age or gender, the loss of a parent dredges up feelings of insecurity, loss of self-worth, loss of love and feeling of lovable, anxiety, loneliness, anger, resentment, guilt, fear of abandonment, depression, and hopelessness (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989).

It is a lengthy and stressful process which often results in long term emotional and psychological damage to children (Kohl, Clark, Straus, Whiney & Hauser, 1994). On the other hand, children of divorce exhibit a host of emotional difficulties far worse than children of intact families (Mckee, 1992). Spigelman *et al.* (1994), Cebollo, Cruise, and Stollack (1985), and Oppawsky (1991) asserted that, they experience pain, anger, sadness, depression, anguish, sorrow, fear, crying, grief, and deterioration in their overall functioning in comparison to children of intact families.

Additionally, they have a sense of being different from other children, limiting them in their friendships (Cebollo *et al.*). Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) found that, five years after separation, greater than two-thirds of children long for parental reconciliation. In spite of this, when children were asked what they would think if their parents remarried, they expressed concerns over parental fighting and arguing and recalled their own unhappiness during the time of divorce (Cebollo *et al.*). Furthermore, children of divorce are sometimes cast into a psychological role required by the parent because he/she is troubled, needy or depressed (Wallerstein, 1985).

In the study of self-esteem in children of divorce, Aro (1989) studied the impact of divorce on adolescent well-being and behaviour. Participants of the study were 2,194 school children aged 15-16 who completed the questionnaire in the classroom. The study revealed that children who experienced family discord displayed more distress symptoms compare to children from intact families.

Meanwhile, Anable (1991) postulated that although post-divorce responses of children vary considerably in intensity and duration, there are distinct patterns related to developmental stages which have been identified. For instance, the latency stage and early adolescent children are particularly vulnerable to emotional problems as evidence by lowered self-esteem, and a declining sense of social competence.

A similar study by Chase, Cherlin and Kierman (1995) examined the long term effects of parental divorce on the mental health of young adults. This indicated that the relative risk of serious emotional disorders increased in the aftermath of divorce, but the larger majority of individuals did not exhibit such risks. Path analyses revealed that, the negative effects of divorce on adult mental health operated indirectly through higher emotional problems and lower levels of school achievement and family economic status at age 16. Results related to timing of divorce, remarriage and intentions, between age 7, emotional problems and divorce, and between age 7, emotional problems and child gender, are also discussed.

A study was conducted on children of divorce's perceptions about intimacy. And it was found out that it influences their ideals about intimate relationships. Intimacy factors such as trust, family conflict, sexual behaviour, and emotional neediness contributed to their perceptions about intimate relationships. In this regard, Johnson and Thomas (1996) found the children of divorce had an overall lack of trust regarding intimate relationships and marriage. In fact, many expected their marriages to fail, perceived intimacy as risky, and sabotaged their intimate relationships due to fear of rejection and a lack of trust.

Additionally, a study on children of divorce and intimate relationships revealed that parental divorce found to be associated with greater incidence of relationship conflict for female adult children of divorce (Aro & Palosaari, 1992) and generally researchers indicated that young female adult children of divorce may have more difficulty with intimate relationships than males.

One angle that has been identified is family conflict as a factor that influences adult children of divorced parents' perceptions about intimacy. Westervelt and Vandenberg (1997) found that difficulties with intimacy were directly related to family conflict rather than to divorce and they suggested that children learned inappropriate methods of expressing intimacy and emotion in homes with high conflict.

Moreover, in adult children of divorced parents, sexual behaviours have also been linked to their struggles with intimacy. Gabardi and Rosen (1992) discovered that students from divorced families had significantly more sexual partners and desired more sexual contact than did students from intact families. Similarly, they found that the fewer the number of years since the divorce, the more sexual behaviour was desired by these individuals.

Thus, they asserted that although heightened sexual behaviour may be indicative of a greater need for emotional connection in adult children of

divorced, they were not finding the emotional intimacy they sought through these behaviours. Again, Amaro (1996) provided support for the need for emotional connection, finding that adult children of divorced parents suffered emotional deficits due to the failed marriages of their parents and that some of them sought to fulfil their emotional needs through committed relationships that were not necessarily healthy.

More importantly, researchers have identified two factors, cohabitation and recognizing divorce as an option, that contribute to adult children of divorced parents' attitudes toward marriage. In 1992 (Tasker) found that adults from divorced families preferred cohabitation to marriage and that these children were more likely to say that they did not want to marry in the future when compared with adults from intact families.

Crucially, the study by Johnson and Thomas (1996) found that, adult children of divorced parents often believe that marriage does not last a lifetime and that divorce is a logical way to escape a bad relationship. Hence, the study concluded that adult children of divorced parents were more reliant on divorce as an option rather than on working out their relationship problems.

A number of similar studies mentioned above that have focused on the negative outcomes related to parental divorce, intimate relationships and other factors. However, there is evidence that some adult children of divorced parents experience positive outcomes as a result of their parents' divorces. Favourable outcomes have included increased maturity, enhanced self-esteem, increased empathy, and androgynous attitudes (Conway, 2003). To support this view, studies conducted from two to ten years post parental divorce families have indicated that children were more mature and independent in terms of taking responsibility for themselves (Kurdek & Siesky, 1980; Reinhard, 1977; Rosen, 1977).

Several researchers such as Santrock and Warshak (1979) and Slater, Stewart, and Linn (1983) found that, male children of divorce families may experience an increase in self-esteem due to having effectively coped with the changes that result from parental divorce. Some researchers have found that, children from divorced families may show increased empathy toward family members. Hetherington (1989) also found that, older sisters from divorced families were more likely to be involved in supportive and nurturing activities with younger sisters than were older sisters from intact families. Moreover, Rosen (1977) found that, some adult children of divorced families gain a greater understanding of human emotions as a result of their parents' divorce.

Another interesting result of two studies (Kurdek & Siesky, 1980; Stoneman & Brody, 1984) supported the possibility that parental divorce can lead children to shift away from traditional sex-role thinking and behaviour toward androgynous thought and behaviours.

Despite of the foregoing studies that have provided insights about children of divorce, empirical attention to the long-term effects of parental divorce on adults is scant (Franklin, Janoff-Bulman, & Roberts, 1990).

7.7 Behavioural Issues

Kalter (1987) pointed out that, aggressiveness and anti-social behaviour is common among children of divorce. Shaw (1991) also asserted that, these children show increased aggression towards peers and defiance towards teachers, and Walstein (1985) adds that, they exhibit more absenteeism. Long and Forehand (1987) revealed children from single – parent homes demonstrate higher rates of absenteeism and truancy, have lower achievement scores, and higher drop-out rates than those from two-parent families. Chelin *et al.* (1991) confirmed these findings, stating that children of divorce experience more emotional and behavioural problems and fare less well in school than children of intact families.

Runyon and Jackson (1988) indicated that, divorce may disrupt a child's ability to freely participate in the learning process, as evidenced by a decline in academic achievement, less time on task, an inability to concentrate, and increased distractibility. Shaw opines that children of divorce will show behavioural problems at home and school after a divorce possibly in an attempt to cope with systematic changes, frequency of contact with the non-residential parent, child-rearing practices, and the post-divorce adjustment of the care-taker parent.

In a British study by Wadsworth, Maclean, Kuh, and Rodgers (1990) found that, parental separation puts children at risk for lesser educational attainment and that delinquency was higher among those boys and girls whose parents are divorced. Kalter (1987) indicates that, the legacy of divorce for children is both emotional pain and development disruption. For adult children of divorce, Kalter asserts that they have difficulty forming and maintaining, "mutually enhancing heterosexual relationships" (p. 589) and Glenn and Kramer (1985) reported that, they have more difficulty with intimate relationships and have a greater inclination towards divorce. This is supported by Kalter, who maintains that children who were sixteen or less when the divorce occurred experience higher divorce rates.

The negative consequences of divorce for these boys and girls include effects on their health and well-being (Friedman *et al.*, 1995; Vobejda, 1997, R.A. Baron, *et al.*, 2006), behaviour problems at school (O'Brien & Bahaur, 1998), a higher risk of mortality throughout their lives, and greater likelihood of getting a divorce themselves (Tucker *et al.*, 1997). Apparently studies show that, some children suffer traumatic experiences which include nightmares, aggression, withdrawal, distractibility, lowered academic performance, reduced physical health, and substance abuse (Bray & Hetherington, 1993; Guidubaldi, Pery, & Nastasi, 1987; Hines, 1997, W. Weichen & M. Lloyed, 1999).

On the study of Bisnaire, Firestone, and Rynard (1990) which examined the factors that are associated with academic achievement in children following parental separation, it was found that the children who maintained their academic performance levels were lesser compared to those children whose levels declined. Although no single measure could accurately predict children's academic adjustment, those who maintained performance level spent significantly more time with both parents.

In 1991, Mammond *et al.*, examined the psychological resilience and vulnerability and academic performance in children of divorced families. Results indicate that, children of divorce showed significant performance deficits in academic achievement, as reflected in their grade-point average, but not in national norm tests scholastic aptitude and other less direct measures of behavioural conformity. An analysis of GPA over time revealed striking disparate patterns of achievement between divorce and control groups. Corresponding patterns of scholastic results suggest strongly that parental divorce can be a critical event in the academic development of children. Large differences in academic achievement between the divorce group as a whole and the control groups cannot be attributed, at least at the time of sampling. Despite a similar family background, marital dissolution, a minority of children of divorce showed vulnerability in the pattern of academic achievement over time while the majority demonstrated academic careers not unlike that of the control group.

Research findings revealed that, parents shape their adult offspring's attitude toward divorce. Since the relationships within family are close, intense, and sustaining (Kapinus, 2004) socialisation process within the family may have a stronger effect on individuals compared to other socialising individuals (Gecas, 1990). Moreover, parents are particularly effective at value and attitude socialisation because they interact with children over an extended period and parents are primary agents of socialisation at a time

when children are especially susceptible to the influence of others (Bengston, 1975; Campbell, 1969; Gecas & Seff, 1990; Peterson & Rollins, 1987 as cited by Kapinus, 2004).

Indeed, parents' attitudes are related to offspring's attitudes on a variety of issues including political affiliation, religious beliefs, and views regarding various facets of family life (Acock & Bengston, 1980; Dunham, 1986). Additionally, the literature suggests that both mother's attitudes toward divorce and mother's marital experiences influence a young adult's perceptions of divorce (Axinn & Thornton, 1996).

From that study results revealed that, parent's influence on young adult's attitude towards divorce may be one reason why children of divorce are more likely to see their own marriages end in separation. Thus, the intergenerational transmission of divorce may operate through parent's influence on young adult's attitudes. More importantly, the study revealed that parents' attitude toward divorce have the greatest influence on the offspring during the late teen years (Kapinus, 2004).

Dunn (1984) claimed, a reoccurring empirical study of adult siblings that critical life events, such as divorce, can precipitate significant changes such as closeness and rivalry in their sibling relationship. However, Mackinnon (1989) have stressed that little is known on studies about sibling relationships within divorced families and the generalisation of married families is arguable, because family functions in divorced families is qualitatively different than in intact families. Similarly, during the process of the divorce parents may have a decreased capacity to parent, being preoccupied with their own needs and are less available for their adolescents' problems (Eno, 1985; Mitchell, 1985, and Wallaerstein & Kelly, 1980).

As siblings may perceive relationships with adults as unstable and painful (Hetherington, 1989 cited by Abby & Dallos, 2004), it follows that the availability and accessibility of other support systems becomes vital for children (Price & McKenry, 1980). Dunn (1984) noted that, siblings whose closeness often increased afterwards, were already close before the event, whereas if a relationship had been hostile and rivalrous, a similar shared event would exacerbate the conflict. In effect, the divorce appears to intensify, rather than fundamentally alter the nature of the relationship.

Eno (1985) suggested that, siblings do become more central to each other's lives but this does not necessarily mean that siblings support each other because some siblings may behave as friends, whereas others behave as enemies. In a study of 50 families, seven children reported that, they had derived the most support and comfort from a sibling. It was apparent that

they had reflected over events together, shared knowledge and tried to make some sense out of why their parents had decided to separate (Mitchell, 1985; Tucker, McHale, & Crouter, 2001). The way that some siblings can share experiences, derive comfort from each other and obtain some stability from their continuing presence (Price & McKenry, 1988) may increase sibling closeness in some cases.

In the longitudinal study by Hetherington (1989), it revealed that older female siblings were more supportive and nurturing towards their sisters by adopting a greater role in teaching and play activities, and for older children during the divorce's more advance stages, positive sibling relationships significantly lessened the divorce's effects.

One Buchanan, Maccoby, and Dornbusch (1996) study showed that, children may be drawn into parental tensions or active conflict and may feel pressure to take sides or form alliances with one parent. While Wallerstein and colleagues (1980) found that parents frequently relied on their adolescent's support, which resulted in profound issues of allegiance and loyalty, although most side-taking stopped after one year. Furthermore, siblings may assign blame differently and choose to live with different parents (Stevenson & Black, 1998). Again, Hetherington (1989) argues that, during the divorce's early stages the effects of the parent-child relationship were so powerful that sibling relationships could do little to counteract this negativity and that some siblings more antagonistic, and acted like rivals in competing for their parent's attention.

In summing up, the study found that rivalry and aggression were found to predominate sibling interaction, which was more significant than the sibling warmth and support (Hetherington, 1989). In contrast, the study by Kier and Lewis (1998) found more positive relationships and specifically found that relationships between sisters were more positive than those between brothers or mixed siblings. Perelberg and Miller (1990) widely observed this link that, females are more able to process emotional feelings in relationships and families.

The severity and duration of separation and divorce-engendered stressors vary from child to child, and family to family, over time. Unalleviated and multiple stressors will encumber children's attempts to cope with the divorce, and may result in increased psychological difficulties in the long term (Kelly, 2003). Research indicates that, the initial period following separation is quite stressful for the vast majority of children and adolescent, as they seem to have little emotional preparation for their parents' separation, and react with distress, anxiety, shock, and disbelief. Only those youngsters who witnessed

or participated in high conflict and violence appeared to be notably relieved at the separation (Amato, 2004; Hetherington, 1989; Kelly, 2003). The crisis engendered responses generally diminish or disappear over a period of one to two years. Furthermore, for some youngsters, their stress predates separation because of chronic high conflict or violence in the marriage (Kelly, 2003).

Alarming, stress intensifying to many youngsters is the abrupt departure of one parent, usually father, from the household. Some children do not see their non-resident parents for weeks or months. Especially for those children with strong attachments to caring parents, the abrupt and total absence of contact is painful and quite stressful, particularly when coupled with an absence of explanation (Kelly, 2003).

It is also noted that an additional source of stress for children is intense conflict between parents after the separation. Children in divorced families have widely varying histories of exposure to marital conflict and violence. Although it is often assumed that parents in high-conflict marriages continue their conflict after separation and divorce, pre-divorce conflict is a far from perfect predictor of the amount of post-divorce conflict. Research indicates between 20 to 25 per cent of children experience high conflict during their parents' marriage (Kelly & Lamb, 2000).

Research indicates the impacts of post-divorce conflict of children's adjustment have been mixed. Some studies have found no association between post-divorce conflict and later adjustment in young children, while others have found that marital conflict is a more potent predictor of post-divorce adjustment than is post-divorce conflict (Booth & Amto, 2001), whereas Hetherington (1999) found that, post-divorce conflict had adverse effects than did conflict in married families. Buchanan *et al.* (1991) referred, the varied findings that may reflect the use of different measures; a failure to differentiate between types of conflict after divorce, and the extent of direct exposure of the child to anger and conflict.

In the extensive study of Hetherington (1999); Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) deterioration in the parenting of both custodial and non-custodial parents for the first several years after separation is also a common stressor. When parents are preoccupied with their own emotional responses to divorce, and the demands of integrating single parenting with social and social needs are stressful. They further commented that, not only are separated and divorced parents more prone to emotional lability, but depression, alcoholism, drug abuse and psychosomatic complaints are more frequent, compared to married parents. Kelly (2003) stressed that, some children

and adolescents become the sole emotional support for their distraught and needy parents.

In relation to that, the most characteristic of diminished parenting is that children experience less positive involvement with custodial parent, including less affection and time spent with them, more anger and more erratic and harsh discipline. The children's own increased anger and upset make it more difficult for distressed single parents to maintain effective parenting practices. Moreover, living with a depressed, disturbed, or character disordered parent after the divorce also places children at risk, and is associated with impaired emotional, social and academic adjustment (Emery *et al.*, 1999; Hetherington, 1999).

The study of Kelly and Lamb (2002) presented that, after separation children faces the stress of immediate and longer-term erosion or loss of important relationships with close friends, extended family members and particularly with non-residential parents. Accordingly, it should be noted that despite increases of shared custody arrangements, the dominant custody remains that of the mother and father visitation, and much of the research has been conducted on fathers as non-residential parents. And the study shows that the shift from daily contact with the father to the typical four days per month access is explicitly distressing to children with close relationships with these parents (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

One of the most enduring controversies in the study of delinquency is the relationship between a parent absent from the home and the onset of delinquent behaviour. Research indicates that, parents whose marriage is secured produce children who are secured and independent. In contrast, research conducted both in the United States and abroad, shows that children raised in homes with one or both parents absent may be prone to antisocial behaviour.

A number of experts contend that a broken home is a strong determinant of a child's law-violating behaviour. The connection seems self-evident, because a child is first socialised at home. Any disjunction in an orderly family structure could be expected to have a negative impact on the child.

Children who have experienced a family breakup are more likely to demonstrate behaviour problems and hyperactivity than children in intact families. Family breakup is often associated with conflict, hostility, and aggression; children of divorced parents are suspected of having lax supervision, weakened attachment, and greater susceptibility to peer pressure. One study of more than four thousand youths in Denver,

Pittsburg, Rochester, stated that the more often children are forced to go through family transitions the more likely they are to engage in delinquent activity.

The relationship between broken homes and delinquency has been controversial, to say the least. It was established in early research, which suggested that a significant association existed between parental absence and youthful misconduct. For many years the link was clear: Children growing up in broken homes were much more likely to fall prey to delinquency than those who lived in two-parent households. Although some researchers still question the divorce-delinquency link, there is a growing sentiment that family breakup is traumatic and most likely has a direct influence on factors related to adolescent misbehaviour.

In her study of the effects of parental absence on children, S. McLanahan (2006) found that, children who grow apart from their biological fathers typically do less well than children who grow up with both biological parents. They are less likely to finish high school and attend college, less likely to find and keep a steady job, and more likely to become teen mothers. Although most children in one-and two-parent families are significant, there is fairly good evidence that father absence per se is responsible for some social problems.

The McLanahan research has been supported by other studies showing that divorce is in fact related to delinquency and status offending, especially if the child had a close relationship with the parent who is forced to leave the home. The effects of divorce seem gender-specific.

Boys seem to be more affected by the post-divorce absence of the father. In post-divorce situations, fathers seem less likely to be around to solve problems, to discuss standards of conduct, or to enforce discipline. A divorced father who remains actively involved in his child's life reduces his son's chances of delinquency.

Girls are more affected by both the quality of the mother's parenting and post-divorce parental conflict. It is possible that extreme levels of parental conflict may serve as a model to young girls coping with the aftermath of their parents' separation.

There are distinct racial and ethnic differences in the impact of divorce/separation on youth. Some groups (Hispanics and Asians) have been raised in cultures where divorce is rare and parents have less experience in developing child-rearing practices that buffer the effects of family breakup on adolescent problem behaviour. Divorce may influence children's misbehaviour through its effect on parental misbehaviour.

Robert Sampson and John Laub (2006) believed that, good marriage helps men 'knife off' from misbehaviour. If marriage helps subdue anti-social behaviour, then it stands that divorce may encourage parental deviance. Parents who are in post-divorce turmoil may influence their children to misbehave.

7.8 Comparisons of Children from Divorce and Intact Families

Findings on the studies of children from divorce families are commonly compared to children from intact families. Thus, several researches have been conducted to study these two groups of children. In as much as it is generally indicated that, divorce can have a detrimental impact on both short-term and long-term adjustments, studies were conducted between these two groups of children. Findings revealed that, individuals from divorced families who, are compared with those from intact families, were found to have lower self-concept (Parrish & Wigle, 1985; Slater, & Linn, 1983), lower life satisfaction and well-being (Amato & Booth, 1991), (Furstenberg & Teitler, 1994; Gohm, Oishi, Darlington, & Diener, 1998) an increased risk of experiencing relationship difficulties (Amato, 1996; Feng, Giarrusso, Bengston, & Fyre, 1999; summers, forehead, Armistead, & Tanbaum, 1998) lower levels of intimacy with parents and peers (Cooney & Kurz, 1996), and a heightened risk of psychopathology (Cooney & Kurz, 1996; McCabe, 1997).

In addition to the study, Amato (1994) found that, children who experience parental divorce exhibit more conduct problems, more symptoms of psychological maladjustment, lower academic achievement, more social difficulties, and poorer self-concepts compared to children in intact two parent families. Similarly, adults who experienced parental divorce as children compared with adults raised in continuously intact two parent families, score lower on a variety of indicators of psychological, interpersonal, and socioeconomic well-being.

However, the overall group differences between offsprings from divorce and intact families are small, with considerable diversity existing in children's reactions to divorce. The results revealed that children's adjustment to divorce depends on several factors, including the amount and quality of contact with non-custodial parents, the custodial parents psychological adjustment and parenting skills, the level of interparental conflict preceding and following divorce, the economic hardship to which children are exposed to and the number of stressful life events that accompany and follow divorce. These factors can be used as guides to assess the probable impact of various legal and therapeutic interventions to improve the well-being of children of divorce.

Divorce will directly or indirectly touch nearly all children worldwide. The effects it leaves in its wake are numerous and demand understanding. A wide array of emotional and behavioural issues can be understood within the context of parental separation. Increased acting-out behaviours, aggression, and oppositional defiance, a decline in academic achievement, increased absenteeism and truancy, lesser educational attainment, depression or sadness, and anger are common indicators of parental divorce and inter-parental conflict. Additionally, research indicates that many effects of divorce persist over a number of years. Some studies show that, adult-children of divorce parents have more somatic complaints, experience a high rate of job loss, and consume alcohol more frequently. It is imperative that educators recognise and understand these clues to provide assistance, support, or referral to the school counsellor as seen appropriate.

Indeed, parental divorce has a significant effect on children behaviour (Adams *et al.*, 1989). Long and Forehand (1987) suggested that, the incidence of maladaptive behaviour among children from divorce families is high.

7.9 Gender Differences on the Impact of Divorce

There are previous studies which revealed that parental divorce affects boys' psychological adjustment more severely than that of girls (Block *et al.*, 1986; Cherlin *et al.*, 1978). Hence, Hetherington (1981) suggested a number of possible reasons for the differences in gender. Boys are believed to be exposed to parental conflict more often and for longer periods than are girls; boys are more often confronted with inconsistent parenting, negative sanctions, and opposition from parents; boys more often stay with the parent of the opposite sex, and therefore lack an adult role-model of the same sex; and finally, during the period immediately following the divorce, boys received less positive support and are viewed more negatively by their surrounding than are girls. However, given that this gender difference is an empirical fact, and given the atmosphere in the home environment, the empirical evidence for gender differences in reaction to parental divorce is inconclusive. According to a review by Demo and Acocck (1988), "the most evidence suggests that adjustment problems are more severe and last for longer periods of time among boys."

Boys and girls may also be affected in different ways depending on the family situation following family dissolution. According to Hetherington (1987, cited in Aquilino 1991), girls adjust better to living in a single-parent family than boys do. Whereas, daughters, in general, have positive

relationship with their mothers, mother-son relationship is often problematic. On the other hand, boys adapt well to, and even benefit from, having a step-parent whereas girls are negatively affected and exhibit problematic relations with parents.

7.10 Long-Term Effects of Divorce

A controversial study on the effects of divorce on children is the longitudinal case study conducted by J. Wallerstein in the 1970's. The "Unexpected Legacy of Divorce" intrigue several researchers on the findings that show the common belief of the last few decades, that divorce may have a negative effect on young children, yet when these children become adults, the negative effects will disappear; this did not prove true based on the study of Wallerstein.

The study brought about a great deal to the study of Rogers (2002) about the problems of Adult Children of Divorce Parents, in short the ACODP. The author strongly agreed to the findings of Wallerstein that effects of divorce follow through into adulthood. Some of these issues centered around their inability to develop healthy relationships. Rogers added that most of Wallerstein subjects were consciously aware of the negative effects of their parents' divorce, but in her study the ACODP participants are often unconscious, leaving them frustrated and confused as to why they respond to certain situations in destructive or unhealthy ways. According to the author ACODP resonated with Wallerstein's case study. Moreover, she quoted Wallerstein's words:

Divorce may liberate parents, but it traps their sons and daughters for years. It is a river that they have to cross that other kids don't have to and they have got to find out how to do it. They are going to ford that river, or build a bridge over it, learn to swim or drown.

(Wallerstein, 1980)

Precisely, children of divorced parents were wounded by the demise of their parents' marriage and it scarred them much the same way it scarred the ACODP, Rogers concluded.

Before reviewing other studies which did not support Wallerstein's findings, Ross and Mirowsky (1999), found evidence that childhood parental divorce does affect the adulthood of the children. It affects them in their depression, socioeconomic, and interpersonal development. Though the effects are indirect, yet they still persist. In the socioeconomic domain,

children with divorced parents' schooling are affected at a young age, which in turn will affect the children's occupation status as they become adults. Researcher's further stressed that the situation leads to depression among adults for the reason that they experienced the divorce of their parents when they were young.

In relation to this, in the interpersonal development, Ross and Mirowsky (1999) have pointed out that, children of divorce are less able to form stable relationships than those with intact families. Although the study was conducted mostly on white middle class participants, the information gathered supported their findings. Moreover, another fact that occurs with children of divorce parents is that they are less likely to trust other people. "When parents leave their children, the children may come to believe that other people similarly cannot be trusted."

In spite of the study, the authors confessed its limitations. As is usually the case of all researches, the findings have, what they call a "Recall bias"; which means asking adults to relay information about their childhood. Because, they have to ask themselves if there is a connection between adult depressions and childhood experience. In any case, they expressed that this is a small problem that has very little effect on their research, but it should not be left out (Ross & Mirowsky, 1999).

In summary, the greatest effect that comes out from parental divorce is depression and this can affect the children throughout their lives. Indeed, this study supports that of Wallerstein, in which the following paragraphs will review how other scholars negated the findings of the study.

Attempting to understand the effects of divorce on children over the last half of the century is no small challenge. Dr. Andrew J. Cherlin, of Johns Hopkins University, has responded to this complex issue with a study entitled, 'Effects of Divorce on Children'. (Persons, 1997). Cherlin was quoted as saying:

"Divorce and its implications for the health and well-being of children is one of our society's strongest concerns." And, "divorce does have a long-term negative effect on some children. However, our study indicates that we may be overestimating the deleterious effects of divorce, and that part of the seeming effect of parental divorce on adults is a result of factors that were present before the parents' marriages dissolved."

Cherlin refuted the conclusions of a study by J. Wallerstein, a clinical psychologist, who raised concerns about the fate of children of divorced families (Person, 1997). Cherlin again quoted by Person:

“Wallerstein is a talented clinician, but her research is biased because the children in her study were much more troubled than the average child and were not representative of the typical experience in the US” Her book is very pessimistic because the kids of the 60 families she was treating were, in fact, doing terribly. For a scientifically accurate picture of how kids are doing, a broader sample is necessary.

Unlike the findings of Wallerstein, Cherlin reiterates that more than a few scholars have had the same findings that only around 20 per cent of children who experienced lasting difficulties, but not have it until their adulthood. He is concerned about the 20 per cent or so which make the effects of divorce raise the risk of experiencing mental health problems. “These first years post-divorce are especially difficult because of economic stress and family disorganization, but over time, most kids return to normal development.” (Cherlin, 1999).

By closely understanding his statement, Cherlin somehow agreed to some degree that divorce which occurred during childhood and adolescence appears to continue to have negative effects. However, because most adults or individuals do not show signs of mental health problems, he disagreed to conclude that it has a life-time effects. Definitely, Cherlin based his conclusions on data from the British National Child Development Study; which was conducted since 1958 with more than 17,000 children from birth through adulthood, with interviews at ages 7, 16, 22, and 33. Using statistical modelling techniques, Cherlin and his colleagues were able to estimate the effects of divorce on subsequent mental health problems (Person, 1999).

However, Amato and Keith (2004) also carried out a study to determine if there are differences in adjustment when children of divorce grow into adulthood. They did a second meta-analysis of 37 studies in which they examined adult children of divorce. Results based on pooled data from 80,000 adults, suggest that parental divorce has a detrimental impact on the life course. Also comparing with those raised in intact two-parent families, adults who experienced parental divorce as children had lower psychological well-being, more behavioural problems, less education, lower job status, a lower standard of living, lower marital satisfaction, a heightened risk of divorce, a heightened likelihood of being a single parent, and poorer physical health.

They added that the view that children adapt readily to divorce and show no lingering negative consequences is clearly inconsistent with the cumulative research in this area. Therefore, in my opinion there is indeed a lasting effect of divorce on children until even after adulthood.

From the findings of previous studies of around 20 per cent of children or adults who are affected by parental split-up, none of those studies have ever discovered if Muslim children or adults are part of the number. Thus, one of the basic objectives of conducting this study is having Muslims as the participants, especially as Islam has a different explanation, understanding, concept and rulings on divorce. This will be dealt with accordingly to the section on ‘divorce in Islam’.

In the rank of life stressors, Weingarten (1985) placed death and grieving the first; second divorce. It is normal for everyone involved in a divorce to go through a time of grieving. Grieving is feeling sad because we have lost something – such as the way we used to live as a family.

This is also agreed by Amato (2004), that social scientists assumed children who ‘lost’ a parent through divorce experienced serious problems similar to those experienced by children who lost a parent through death. He further stressed that whereas the death of a parent is usually unintended and unavoidable, marital dissolution is freely chosen by at least one parent. Consequently, the question of the impact of divorce on children took on moral overtones. These concerns, combined with the dramatic increase in the rate of divorce during the last few decades, resulted in a proliferation of studies on the effects of divorce on children (Amato, 2004).

The question on whether children do better if their parents got divorced was asked when parent’s relationship is in high-conflict marriage. Jekielek (1998) found that, such children reported heightened emotional well-being and feelings of relief that they were removed from the scene of continuing warfare. Kline *et al.* (1991) and L’Heureux-Dube (1998) also support this view. Williams, Sawyer, and Wahlstrom (2006) fairly presented their views on Wallerstein’s pessimistic view and Hetherington’s optimistic view on the effects of divorced to children. Both studies conducted a longitudinal study, but it significantly differs in its results. Wallerstein’s study reported that 10 to 15 years after their parents separation, children were entering adulthood as ‘worried, underachieving, self-deprecating and sometimes angry young men and women’. On this 25-year study, she reported that 40 per cent of the grown-up children had never married – compared with 81 per cent of men and 87 per cent of women of those ages in the general population; and she added up the reason to this to be because these children did not grow up in loving, contented families, and they did not know what one ought to be like.

To compare with Hetherington’s study, although some findings about children of divorce are disturbing, Hetherington believes that the harm of divorce has been exaggerated and the positive effects have been ignored

(Williams *et al.*, 2006). Hetherington discovered increased resilience, with 75–80 per cent of children whose parents divorced adapting to the change. While the other 20–25 per cent were found to be at risk for life-long emotional or behavioural problems, the greater percentage 'are functioning in the normal range', and 'some are functioning remarkably well' (as quoted in Duenwald (2002) cited by Williams (2006)).

Similarly, Tobey (2002) claimed that, divorce of parents is certainly a traumatic experience for many children as they are affected by divorce in many ways. However, his claim continued by saying that it depends upon the age, gender and developmental stage of the child. Moreover, over one million American children suffer from the divorce of their parents each year.

Studies show that children of parents undergoing a divorce are often concerned about fear of change, fear of being abandoned, loss of attachment and hostility between parents. Children often find themselves caught in an emotional trauma during these times. Research shows that divorce results in a relatively higher incidence of depression in children. It sometimes leads to aggressive, hyperactive and impulsive disorders. It has been found that divorce belittles the child's capacity to handle differences in life. Moreover, these emotional disturbances can continue for long years depending upon the child's personality and maturity. If the pain is too severe, then serious celebration of suicide may also occur. Otherwise, they grieve as they would moan a death (Tobey, 2000).

Simultaneously, a divorce often pulls children back from active group participation in the classroom and from family and friends. Social science research reveals that children from divorced families have lower graduation rates in high school and the dropouts from school is twice of that in intact families.

As had been observed, studies on the effects of divorce has captured the interests of several researchers. Interestingly, Johnson *et al.*, 2001 stated that indeed the number of families affected by divorce has grown tremendously in the past 50 years. Almost 50 per cent of marriages end in divorce in the United States, and 1 million children are affected by their parents' divorce each year (Bureau of the Census, 2002). He added that although not conclusive, existing literature has found that children from divorced families experience varied effects of divorce.

Children from divorced families are more likely than children from intact families to have academic problems, exhibit problematic externalising and internalising behaviours, be less socially responsible and competent, and have lower self-esteem (Amado & Keith, 1991; Cherlin & Furstenberg,

1994; Hetherington, 1989 as cited by Johnson, 2001.) Furthermore, developmental tasks of adolescence and young adulthood, such forming intimate relationships, individuating from parents, and increasing social and economic autonomy, seem to be somewhat more arduous for youths from divorced families than those from intact families. In addition, these children are also at high risk for lower levels of school achievement, unemployment, being sexually abused, and association with antisocial peers (Amato & Keith, 1991 cited by Johnson, 2001).

In relation to this, children from divorced families also have psychosocial difficulties that it appears parent-child relationships are perceived differently by young adults from divorced families and intact families. College students from divorced families perceive their parental relationships, particularly with fathers, less positively than children from intact families (Fine, Moreland, & Schwebel, 1993; Fine, Worley, & Schwebel, 1986; White, 1992 & 1994). Other research has shown that adult children of divorced parents feel less affection for their parents, have less contact with them, and engage in fewer intergenerational exchanges of assistance than adults from intact families (Amato & Booth, 1991; White, 1992 & 1994).

Interestingly, a qualitative research methodology on this study by Bonkowski (1989) indicated that, young adults from divorced families have difficulty establishing feelings of trust in their own relationships, continue to mourn the loss of their family unit, have difficulty individuating, and view post-divorce emotional closeness to their parents as burdensome.

Rationally, although parental divorce has varied effects on children, family factors seem to moderate the influence of those effects (Amato & Booth, 1991, Johnson & McNeil, 1998; Lopez, Campbell, & Watkin, 1998 as cited by Johnson, 2001). Hence, for instance, when members of divorced families demonstrate warmth, harmony, and cohesion with each other, the differences between the adjustment of children in these families compared to those in intact families are decreased (Hetherington, 1989). And higher levels of post-divorce family functioning also appear to moderate the emotional cut-offs that have been associated with parental divorce (Johnson & Nelson, 1998). Actually, as Johnson and McNeil (1998) noted, young adults' perception of intimidation by their parents appear to be reduced by higher levels of family functioning while feelings of equality between the young adults and their parents are increased.

More than few scholars have studied the effect of parental divorce and family factors on children is becoming more clear, although research is needed

to further assess longer term developmental outcomes for young adults. Also, although family factors have been shown to moderate the effects of parental divorce, there is a need for a comprehensive assessment of the family variables that might influence developmental task attainment for young adults from divorced families.

Following the above, mentioned results on effects of divorce, some researches focusing on the age at the time of parental divorce has shown that the younger the child was at the time of divorce, the more problems that child had with adult intimate relationships (Gabardi & Rosen, 1992; Oderberg, 1986). In the study, Oderberg found that the younger the child at the time of divorce, the less support that child had outside the family, and younger children were less able to comprehend or cope with the related issues.

In the same context, as Gabardi & Rosen (1992) noted that the earlier the age of the child at the time of divorce, the greater the risk that adult children of divorce would form unrealistic beliefs about relationships in general. Actually, these researches have suggested that adult children of divorced may interpret disagreements as precursors to divorce and may hold misperceptions about needing a perfect partner to be satisfied.

7.11 Marriage and Divorce in Islam

Islam as a way of life encompasses the whole aspect of human endeavours, spiritual as well as secular. Spiritual aspect specifically deals with man's relationship with his creator (Allah, Most High), that is, his responsibilities and obligations towards Him while the secular aspect primarily deals with his relationship towards his fellow human beings as well as to himself.

From the Islamic perspective, these two essential aspects of human existence are inseparable and intertwined if Muslims as a community or as an individual want to achieve peace, harmony, happiness and success in this world and most especially for the life hereafter which is the ultimate goal of all humans who firmly believe in the Day of Judgement and the life hereafter.

Thus Allah, Most High has given man the guidance in the form of commandments, injunctions and provisions called *Shari'ah* which are embodied in the Holy Qur'an as well as the sayings and deeds of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him.) sent by Him in order to personally interpret hard provisions and directly teach the proper Islamic doctrines as well as to emulate his actions which were in accordance with the divine will and which are incorporated in the Book of *Hadiths*.

Hence, one of the most popular if not controversial of all essential *Qur'anic* injunctions conveyed by Allah, Most High to man was Divorce (*Talaq*). Divorce in Islam is such a vast subject only the learned Islamic scholar could probably fathom its depth and its detailed implications for both individual spouses, their children and the society as a whole. The researcher who is wanting and lowly in her Islamic knowledge will humbly try to present the subject matter in its basic and simplest way possible so as to shed some light on this particular Islamic injunction (divorce).

7.11.1 Marriage in Islam

Although divorce is allowed in Islam, yet it should not be taken in a light manner. Marriage is considered sacred and noble considering the importance and the valuable purpose it entails, that is to produce offspring for the continuity of the human race and for the service of Allah, Most High. Hence, the Prophet of Islam said: "Among lawful things, divorce is most hated by Allah, Most High." (Reported by Abu Daw'ud). In this regard, Muslim spouses should treat their marriage with utmost care and with full understanding about the various intricacies that may arise in this sacred relationship. As the saying goes, "Marriage is not only a bed of roses but thorns as well." But one may ask, "What if the marriage relationship turns sour and instead of savouring happiness it brings misery and enormous sufferings to both parties and it becomes impossible for them to live together in peace and harmony, is it more reasonable, just and fair for them to separate ways?"

Yes, in cases of irreparable breakdown of relationship, Islam provides a way-out. The teachings of Islam in this matter (divorce) is so comprehensive that volumes of books had been written. The Holy *Qur'an*, the *Hadith* as well as the exegesis of Islamic scholars pinpoint the detailed approaches in dealing with the proper exercise of this injunction. As much as possible dissolution of marriage must be avoided. Islam values the importance of a family, the unit structure of the society, hence meticulous care and effort should be adopted to save the marriage breakdown.

If the couple could not resolve their marital problems and differences by themselves then outside interference especially the relatives among both parties is highly recommended. (Qur'an 4:34-35). These relatives should exert efforts to reconcile the spouses. An arbitrary committee is recommended from both sides in order to patch-up the problems and to come up with meaningful solutions.

But if the relatives' efforts failed and the rift between the husband and wife deepens, the matter then devolves on the Islamic society for solution. Two individuals of good will and sound judgement, one from the wife's and one from the husband's side, should meet with the couple in order to try to resolve their differences. Perhaps the sincerity of their efforts may bear fruit and Allah, Most High may bring about reconciliation between the spouses. (Qur'an 65:2)

If all these efforts fail and every course tried proves to be of no avail, the husband may resort to the final solution which is divorce (*Talaq*). It is permissible in Islam under unavoidable circumstances, when living together becomes tortuous and mutual hatred aggravated each passing day that makes life unbearable to both parties, thus marital responsibilities becomes impossible to fulfil. Hence, divorce, though stigmatised as 'the most hateful thing to Allah, Most High' is allowed when between two bad roads the lesser evil is to be followed.

7.11.2 Provisions for Divorce

Since Islam aimed for the establishment of a more solid marriage relationship, certain liberties are denied in the interest of this objective. The right of divorce is given to the man only, except in very exceptional cases. This preference to the husband against the wife is justified considering that the husband has all the financial obligations of the family. After divorce he will still be responsible, to provide his former wife's maintenance during her '*iddah*', (i.e. the period fixed by the *Fiqh* during which a divorced or widowed woman may not be married to another man) and if there are any children in the family then he will be responsible for their expenses. Thus to grant the wife equal rights with her husband while she has no financial obligation is unfair and unjust.

As stated above a wife can only ask for a divorce in very exceptional cases such as:

1. The wife can insert a clause in the marriage contract regarding:
 - a. Incompatibility of temperament
 - b. Maltreatment
 - c. Refusal of maintenance
 - d. Unannounced journeys

The taking of another wife without consultation are so provided against and if any of the above conditions is broken she can approach a lawyer to obtain a divorce for her through the courts.

2. The wife can make it impossible for her husband not to divorce her by being intolerably refractory, vexatious shrewish or deliberately incompatible in relationships, familial, sexual or social;
3. The wife can resort to the courts if the husband has been incapable or negligent in supplying her with maintenance or has put obstacles in the way of her obtaining it; or if either partner deprives the other of conjugal rights or fails in marital duties; the Muslim *Qadhi*, if the woman's plea is proved, can compel the husband to treat her right, to be reconciled, to disburse the proper sums, to confer her rights upon her in every form: and if the husband proves recalcitrant, or refuses to obey the judge's orders, the judge can then compel him to divorce his wife;
4. The wife can enter a plea in the Islamic court and obtain an injunction if the husband accuses her of lewdness, unchastity or unfaithfulness, or denies his own paternity of her child: if the husband cannot prove his case the judge will order the husband to separate himself from his wife in accordance with the relevant legislation;
5. The wife may, in the case of intolerable revulsion or aversion, in a simple fashion bring about a discontinuance of their union by renouncing a large part of her marriage portion, while freeing her husband from his obligation to pay her alimony during the '*Taladh*' breathing-space period;
6. The wife, if the husband absents himself so that no news of him reaches her and she falls into financial or other difficulties, can resort to the courts and request a divorce and the judge will then perform the necessary formalities to annul her marriage contract. (Islam and Divorce-Light of Islam p. 4)

It must be stated with utmost emphasis that since divorce in Islam is the most abhorrent of all permitted things, it must be resorted to only in extreme cases of necessity and as such, certain stringent procedures and conditions must be observed. Among such procedures and conditions are:

1. One must resort to divorce only after having exhausted all efforts of proper reconciliation and mediation;
2. If all efforts fail, while pronouncing divorce, one must be in a sober state of mind and having clear intention to divorce;

3. The husband should use the words of divorce with full awareness after much thinking and consideration. Using the words of divorce in haste or anger is not right;
4. The proper procedure in giving divorce is when the woman is not pregnant and not in her menstrual cycle;
5. Divorce can take place by saying one time "I have divorced you" (*tallagtuuki*) or "You are divorced" (*antitaliq*). After this, the woman should spend the time of her *'iddah*. During this *'iddah* period the husband can cancel his divorce and can resume the matrimonial relationship, but if it does not happen then the divorce takes effect and at the end of the *'iddah* period their marriage ends. There is no need to repeat the words of divorce more the once. Even one divorce is sufficient to terminate the relationship;
6. Divorce can be initiated by the husband or by the wife but only the husband has the right to pronounce words of divorce (*talaq*) to his wife. The wife can seek divorce from the husband through *khul'*, but if he refuses to grant her request then she can seek the dissolution of marriage through the court of law;
7. The provision of the second and third divorce is given for a husband who divorces his wife one time and cancels his divorce, but then after sometime changes his mind and divorces her again for the second time. Then he changes his mind resumes the relationship and again after that he divorces her. The *Shari'ah* says that now this relationship should end. Marriage is a serious matter and one cannot keep divorcing one's wife and taking her back. After the third divorce he cannot take her back. The third divorce is called the 'irrevocable divorce' (*Talaq mughallaz*). The wife now becomes forbidden to her husband completely. She cannot go back to this husband who has divorced her three times, unless she marries another person who out of his free will divorces her and then after the *'iddah* she and her previous husband want to remarry. This is called *halal'lah* in the language of the *Shari'ah*. This rule is given by the *Shari'ah* to reduce the occurrence of three divorces and to protect the honor and dignity of the woman;
8. The basic rule is that divorce must be uttered with full consciousness and without coercion. If a person pronounced the words of divorce to his wife, in a fit of anger, while he lost all control over himself or due to the influence of intoxicants which he sinfully consumed, or he was forced by

someone else to do so, then in all these cases his words of divorce are null and void and have no effect (Lari, 2004).

7.12 Islamic Divorce and Western Divorce

To further illuminate the subject matter being discussed, a little comparison is made by the researcher about the termination of marriage to other known societies with different religions and cultures.

In the industrialised world, the divorce rates are rapidly increasing and divorce laws are more and more liberalised. However, divorce in Islam remains a highly remarkable moral act in the same way as marriage is a very sacred and noble endeavor. Allah, Most High has issued innumerable injunctions as mentioned in the Holy *Qur'an* exhorting couples to stay firm and practice patience and endurance with one another to strengthen the bond of the marital relationship. However, if separation is inevitable, it is to be sought without intent of injury or harm between the parties. Allah, Most High assures them of His encompassing mercy and help if they stray together and start all over again in their marital journey, yet if they should separate ways, He assures them as well of enrichment of His all-reaching bounty provided they part gracefully and honourably.

While Islam realistically faces the consequences of divorce as a fact, Christianity says blankly, 'No divorce'. In reality this rigid prohibition brings more damage, sorrow and pain to the parties involved. Islamic statutes provide every possible safeguard to prevent the separation by divorce being abused. By forcing the parties to stick together although there is a clear indication of relationship bankruptcy between the parties would only worsen the already worst situation, thus by setting them apart with honour and dignity is the more commendable in Islam.

America makes divorce easier for both parties, hence it is not surprising that American divorce figures are the highest of all. All over the world especially in Europe and the West are experiencing an unprecedented influx of unbridled marital disintegration due to the laxity in divorce procedures and every conscientious person everywhere are well aware of this potential danger, and fear it acutely. Thus it is high time that this flood of evil which is currently sweeping the world should be at least minimised and tamed, if it is impossible to be eradicated.

Islam offers its regulations on family life, matrimony, and the respective positions of men and women, as a way which all nations might do well to follow and emulate remembering that it was a Westerner, Voltaire, who once

said: "The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him.) reduced the unlimited harems of unfortunate women maintained by pre-Islamic potentates to a maximum of four wives: and his legislation on marriages and divorces is the most noble and effective ever conceived, formulated and enacted by any authority at any time in the world's history, religious, political or social." (Islam and Divorce-Light of Islam, p. 6)

Therefore, let me say that Muslims must protect their family life and must dissent or avoid divorce as much as possible. Just imagine the worst consequences that may affect the persons concerned especially the innocent children. It was said that psychologists, jurists and sociologists, concerned by the effects of divorce on moral and juridical personality of those involved, have gone deep into the subject, and given it as their considered verdict that the ejection of a man and wife, let alone the children, from the warmth of home-life into the cold unwelcome of any substitute establishment they may find, deals a moral blow to their spirits and exposes their children to the onset of moral ailments and psychic traumas against which family life had immunised and protected them. These scientists further hold, that for these reasons divorce should be rendered practically impossible by severe sanctions, except in a few cases where some causes, generally from outside, like the onslaught of insanity or criminality, makes an exception to the rule. (Islam and Divorce-Light of Islam, p. 1)

This particular findings from these noted social scientists somehow coincided with the researchers findings on the same subject in this study. Therefore, in lieu of the above discussions, if it becomes necessary to have divorce then the application of Islamic methods and procedures seems more appropriate to be followed.

7.13 Conclusion

Literatures on divorce are abundant. Numerous researchers have undertaken this project where some were short-term researches, while others used longitudinal approaches. These studies presented substantial evidence in its respective findings like for instances the studies on Children of divorce and intimate relationships; The effect of parents' attitude toward divorce on offspring's attitudes; Understanding the divorce cycle: The children of divorce in their own marriages; The impact of divorce on sibling relationships; Changing perspectives on children following divorce; Parental divorce and its effects on differentiation of levels on young adults; and The psychological effects of divorce on children; all these researches

have fairly provided adequate findings on effects of divorce to children and all those involve. But, missing in the research literature are the experiences or narrative of Muslim adolescents on their parents' divorce. Therefore, this study attempted to fill that existing gap in the body of literature.

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