

Divorce is not always unpleasant and disagreeable

الطلاق ليس دائما بغیضا و غیر سار

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Abstract: Despite the emphasis on the violent negative impact of divorce on children and their parents, the divorce rate continues to rise, and if many of its repercussions have sometimes left a state of family instability, however, research confirmed that a large proportion of children and adolescents from divorced families were unaffected by this event and were able to continue a normal life.

Indeed, many studies have shown the advantages of divorce and the benefits that it can bring, and how sometimes it comes as the preferred alternative and the best solution to some of the complex and difficult situations that the family may face. In light of these conflicting and sometimes contradictory approaches to the phenomenon of divorce, the following questions can be asked:

What is the real impact of divorce? Who are most affected by divorce? -1

Why does the experience of divorce severely affect some individuals, while others can get out of it unharmed? -2

When does divorce become an appropriate solution? And what benefits can such a decision bring? How can the associated negative effects be absorbed? -3

relationships life ; impact ; parents children ; family **Keywords :** divorce

ملخص على الرغم من التأكيد المستمر على التأثير العنيف للطلاق على الأبناء وأولياء أمورهم، إلا أن معدل الطلاق مستمر في الارتفاع، وإذا كانت له تداعيات على الحياة الأسرية، فلم تتمكن نتائج الدراسة من تأكيد حدوث ذلك مع النسبة الأكبر من المنخرطين في عيانتهم المدروسة، مما يعني أن نسبة كبيرة من الأطفال والمراهقين من العائلات المطلقة لم يتأثروا بهذا الحدث وكانوا قادرين على مواصلة الحياة الطبيعية. وبالفعل فقد بينت دراسات عديدة مزايا الطلاق وفوائده وكيف يكون أحيانا البديل المفضل والحل الأمثل لبعض المواقف المعقدة والصعبة التي قد تواجه الأسرة. في ظل هذه المقاربات المتعارضة وأحيانا المتناقضة لظاهرة الطلاق يمكن طرح الأسئلة التالية:

1- ما هو الأثر الحقيقي للطلاق؟ من هم الأكثر تضررا من الطلاق؟

2- لماذا تؤثر تجربة الطلاق بشدة على بعض الأفراد بينما يخرج منها آخرون سالمين؟

3- متى يصبح الطلاق حلاً مناسباً؟ وما هي الفوائد التي يمكن أن يجلبها مثل هذا القرار؟

الكلمات المفتاحية: الطلاق؛ الحياة الأسرية ؛ التأثير ؛ العلاقات بين الآباء والأبناء

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1- Introduction

Most people tend to regard separation and divorce as inevitably distressing and unpleasant experiences. To the majority, the significance of such broken marriages seems to be for the children and unfortunately the reality seems to confirm this in more than one dimension and aspect. In addition to the circumstances which precede divorce and those which accompany and follow the event, and through which family life may undergo rapid and sudden changes that will naturally change it into an unstable environment for everyone especially children who would be left to themselves whose basic needs may be affected and not regularly satisfied, especially when they are drawn into parental conflict, and become the objects of parents' revenge on one another. Regarding parents, divorce has always been associated with fatigue, exhaustion and pressure for them as well as misery and hardship of living in addition to the many other psychological and emotional and financial difficulties. Such conditions made many of them feel lost and hopeless, and have not been able to act positively to rebuild a new family life. Despite all this emphasis on the negative repercussions of divorce on children, adolescents and their parents, the overall divorce rate remains high, and when we reflect on the results which classify divorce, in terms of consequences, as catastrophic, we see that these repercussions do not always apply to the largest proportion of individuals involved in research samples, which means that a significant number of persons belonging to divorced families were not affected by this event and managed to overcome most of its inconveniences and lead a normal life. In fact, numerous studies of different types have clearly shown, with irrefutable evidence, what privileges and advantages divorce can bring, and how it often turns to become the most appropriate way that leads to the preferred alternative and the best solution to some complex and extremely difficult situations which the family may be confronted with. In all cases, divorce is largely practiced despite all the complications and obstacles imposed by some existing systems in contemporary societies and the complexities arising from certain religious beliefs. In light of the above, the following questions can be asked:

1- What is the true magnitude of the divorce effect? and who are the parties mostly affected by the divorce?

2- Why are some people deeply affected by divorce experience, while others are able to overcome it with minimal damage?

3- When would divorce become an appropriate solution? and what benefits can such a decision bring, and how could the accompanying negative effects be absorbed?

These are some of the questions that will be addressed in this article, with the aim of shedding light on the interactions produced by the divorce process and the intersections it imposes on the family reality. If we do not aspire to provide definitive answers to the questions asked, we are, nevertheless, convinced that the act of divorce is a very natural human behavior despite the tragic consequences it sometimes entails, and that its main function - in complementarity with others - is to achieve balances that preserve to human life its taste and meaning.

2- The negative effects of divorce are undeniable

There is no doubt that divorce has violent effects and serious repercussions on the life of the individual and society. It often results in loss of the family unity and that its most

severe effects will physically and psychologically affect the weakest party, namely children and adolescents.(Videon,T.M.,2002;Anderson, J.,2014; Langton, C.E.,& Berger, L.M.,2011; Azumah, F.D. et al,2017; Sun, Y. & Li, Y.,2002). In fact, as some European and American studies have estimated, between 30 and 50% of children do suffer from parental divorce (Shamsie,J.,1985.; Hernandez, D. J.,1994) . On the other hand, the act of divorce will completely reverse the situation and change the course of family life, creating a state on instability and insecurity and pushing all family members to give up past habits and necessarily review their attitudes and enter into a difficult process of adjusting to the realities and facts brought about by the changes which would have naturally touched the different aspects of family life and generated a lot of new challenges. (Espenshade, T.J., 1979; Weiss, R.S., 1984.; Booth, A., & Amato, P.,1991; Kitson, G.C., & Morgan, L.A.,1990; Kurdeck, L.A.,1990; Maccoby, E.M., et al, 1993; Albrecht, S. L.,1980)

2.1- Effects of divorce on the family as a system, organization and a unit:

The occurrence of divorce causes a violent disturbance in family life, so that this entity loses a lot of its balance and stability, which in turn leads to many difficult situations namely:

- *Most divorced families for objective reasons become poor during this period of their life*, facing thus great financial difficulties (Hoffman, S.D.& Duncan, G.J., 1988; Heath, J.A.,& Kiker, B.F.,1992 ; Finnie, R.,1993 ; Aassve, A., et al, 2007).

- *Divorced families live under stress and excessive and permanent anxiety*: which will negatively affect its members' quality of behavior and reactions and threaten their mental health (Booth, A., & Amato, P.,1991; Buchanan, C. & Heiges, K.L., 2001; Cherlin, A. J., et al,1998).

- *Low family supervision* : Divorce simply makes difficult for parents to raise and supervise their children and ensure their needs satisfaction in proportion to the demands of their age especially when they are moving between their parents. (Furstenberg, F.F.,& Nord, C.,1985; Maccoby, E.E., & Mnookin, R.H., 1992) In post-divorce conditions, parents are often unable to perform their parental duties as required, and the quality of their parenting decreases noticeably when facing great difficulties in coordinating their efforts towards their children.

- *Important and sensitive roles are also disrupted* : Such as the permanent separation of the husband from his wife and the wife from her husband and the physical absence of one parent, and all the effects it has on the family atmosphere. When the noncustodial parent leaves, the second parent will have to cover duties and roles previously performed by both the father and the mother which will make him under more pressure, and seriously affect the performance of his role (Furstenberg, F. F., & Nord, C.,1985). And although many divorced people do remarry within three of four years (Coleman, M., Ganong, L., & Fine, M., 2000), such remarriages unfortunately are less stable and more vulnerable to dissolution than the first marriages.

- *The transmission of marital instability across generations*: It has been observed that many daughters of divorce families become pregnant and give birth outside marriage at an early age, (McLanahan,S.S.,1988). This happens mostly as a result of teenage girls' resentment and hatred of the parents' home, as it no longer provides them with the desired

stability and satisfies their needs, in addition to the atmosphere of tension that has become prevalent, and it appears that twice as many children from these homes as likely to cohabit than would do children of unbroken homes.(Thornton, A.,1991). It also follows that some of these children, especially males, may refrain from marriage, assuming that it will not bring them any good.(Bumpass, L.L.,et al.,1991).

2.2- Effects of divorce on children

Here is a brief presentation of a non-exhaustive sample of what may happen to children during the divorce event as confirmed by research results:

- *Children of broken families are more likely to repeat their parents' scenario* : It is the model that they have been coexisting with, with no other alternative they may think of and adopt. (Greenberg, E.F., & Nay, W.R.,1982; Amato, P. R., & DeBoer, D.D.,2001; Pezzin, L.E., & Schone, B. S.,1999). The parents' divorce experience doesn't prepare children for future stable marital relationships, and children of divorced parents in their own marriages, as Jarar explains, "are more likely to be unhappy, to escalate conflict, to communicate less, to argue frequently, and to shout or to physically assault their spouse when arguing Thus, the likelihood of divorce is transmitted across generations.» (Jarar, 2021,p.10). This very probable development was expected since in such circumstances: children would prefer to leave their parents' homes early and live on their own even before reaching full maturity principally because of the absence of family cohesion and harmony and their failure to handle their parents' constant conflict and overcome its consequences (Jarar,2021,p.8) They are more likely to have hostile relationships with people, because they grew up in an atmosphere full of violent confrontations between parents, where they didn't have the opportunity to learn ways to constructively deal with people, and could only witness scenes of collision, conflict , discord and disagreement.

- *Children lose one of the two parents*: The nature of divorce and the circumstances surrounding it or arising from it make children practically lose one or both parents .This absence has been witnessed to be problematic for children's socialization. One of the strongly indicative images of the deteriorating relationship lies in the children's inability to show a balanced loyalty towards the two parents. What worsens the situation is the attempt by each parent to win the children's loyalty at the expense of the other, (Lawer,1995,p.251), making of them an object of their open conflict instead of creating conditions that allow them to get from both parents the needed affection, warmth and love. This is at a time when the study results confirm that coordinating efforts between divorced parents was one of the prominent factors in helping improve children quality of life in such circumstance, particularly during their early life stages.(Adamsons & Pasley, 2013).

- *Children's lack of quality of life*: Several reports and follow-ups have unanimously agreed that the children's quality of life after parental divorce deteriorates remarkably, mainly because of certain economic repercussions of the decision, by which the family becomes poorer and strongly affecting the child's well-being.(Felder-Puig, R.,et al, 2008; Norton, A.J., & Glick, P.C., 1986; Brooks-Gunn, J.,et al, 1994)

- *Poor school achievement* : low educational attainment, school problems and school failure are among the first direct consequences of family disruption on children. Such a strong negative relationship between the two is rarely absent from the results of studies on

impact of divorce and family separation (Hobcraft, 2000; Kaye, S.H.,1989; Størkersen et al. 2005; Wadsby, M., and Svedin, C.G.,1996). Among the proposals put forward to explain this was the deficits resulting from the absence of one parent whose presence and parenting inputs would be reduced enormously .(Amato, P.R., & Keith, B., 1991; Rodgers, B., & Pryor, J.,1998), and as Amato and Keith in their joint article “Parental divorce and adult well-being: A meta-analysis” observe, many of these children would be less likely to take further education.(Amato, P.R., & Keith, B.,1991)¹. With regards to boys in particular, divorce and parental separation have been reported to have greater impact on their development skills and academic achievements.(Fergusson, D. M.,et al,1994; Wallerstein, J. S.,1991; Pagani, L.et al,1997; Martin-Lebrun,E.et al, 1997), and that children of divorced parents are twice as likely to drop out of high school and less likely to attend college, because in presence of a divorce full of tensions, contempt, and hatred between parents, children find themselves in unenviable circumstances which will turn their life upside down and take away from it everything that was beautiful, comfortable, reassuring and even the echo of those happy days they were able to live before divorce.

- *Children's adjustment difficulties and psychiatric disorders* : For them who simply cannot imagine life around them without their parents, divorce opens a door to darkness, mystery, anxiety, fear, despair, and it is no surprise that a large number of children of divorced families have found it difficult to adapt to new situations and have for relatively long periods experienced adjustment problems,(Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan,2000) which develop into behavioral disorders (Cherlin,A.J.,et al,1991), and if they are not urgently followed by favorable conditions that would absorb some of these negative effects and prevent children from going down this dark path, it is expected that they will enter psychological states of agitation and may develop psychiatric disorders,(Felitti & Anda, 2010), and their attempt to suicide would be the worst thing to expect if there is no relief or improvement in their family environment, since the risk of suicide attempt in such circumstances has been strongly confirmed (Jarar, p.10)

3- Divorce is not always abominable :

If we rely only on the results of the studies we have mentioned without considering the great number of other studies, surveys and research, which have touched all cultures and all regions of the world, the question "Does divorce affect children in particular and the rest of the family?" should at least be accorded a conditional yes, since apparently there is among researchers a consensus on the harm of divorce. However, when we look back and reconsider the family scene and analyze some of the findings, including an objective reassessment of the magnitude of the effect that researchers hypothesize to be one of the causes of divorce, we can notice that many other important factors have been marginalized, and that researchers have not even paid attention to, despite their strong presence during the divorce event. Among the many overlooked factors, we will limit ourselves to citing a few in order to rebalance the way in which divorce problem and its repercussions have been presented :

1- Not all children involved in these investigations are reported to have problems which means that not all family disruptions are attended with bitterness or followed by

¹- the Amato and Keith's two articles“ Parental divorce and adult well-being: A meta-analysis” and “Parental divorce and the well-being of children: a meta-analysis” are both published in 1991.

aggravated personal problems for those involved, and as the two-decade follow-up Virginia study showed, the majority of children of divorced families displayed no significant differences from children of the intact, single-parent, or step/remarried ones. (Hetherington, E.M., & Kelly, J., 2002), taking into account that even for the majority of those affected by divorce, suffering didn't last for a long time since they quickly recovered (Amato, P. R., 2001). and only a relatively small minority experienced serious problems after parental divorce that occurred during their childhood or later when they reached adulthood. (Arkowitz, H., & Lilienfeld, S.O., 2013).

2- Separation and divorce must be regarded as caused events before they subsequently operate as causal factors themselves: these two aspects can only be separated for the sake of analysis. This is explained by the fact that many of the sufferings endured by children from divorced families began to appear before the divorce and were associated with the outbreak of conflicts and quarrels and high levels of marital discord between parents in addition to the ineffective and inconsistent parenting and low parent-child affection. (Demo and Cox 2000; Rodgers and Pryor, 1998), and that children have already, long before divorce, developed behavioural disorders (Block, J. H., et al., 1986), and if we consider the results of certain studies, these pre-divorce events may have put pressure on marital relationships and therefore increase the chances of parents' divorce. (Acock and Demo, 1994; Cherlin et al., 1991).

3- The absence of the biological parent has to be studied from other angles namely his active role before he departs and the quality of his or her presence. More objective criteria would be that the more gratification he or her has provided the greater should be the children sense of loss, and the more the frustration was caused by a parent, the greater should be their sense of relief and joy from his absence. This was confirmed by a study conducted on a sample of 295 students from divorced families, and as Winch reported, individuals who saw their families as being happy before divorce did experience greater trauma in response to the divorce compared to those who viewed their families as being unhappy. (Winch, R.F., 1971), a result that was confirmed by other studies, showing that people who divorce after unsatisfactory marriages- when compared with people who divorce from less dissatisfactory ones- experience a lower increase in depression. (Kalmijn, M., & Monden, C.W., 2006) In all cases, divorce which keeps away children from abusive violent and unjust parents and makes an end to the family disturbance and instability can only be welcomed, (Pierret, 2001) and the feeling of losing one parent, on the other hand, would expectedly increase when that absent party's presence had been strongly supportive for members of the family and providing high quality of care (Booth, A., & Amato, P.R., 2001; Jaffee, S.R., et al., 2003).

4- The circumstances following the divorce events can be crucial, and the absence of a parental figure can be aggravated, decreased, or simply neutralized due to other emerging variables which may help create more favorable conditions that would probably benefit all parties. Parents may agree to adopt a constructive strategy which would help them organise and regulate their relationship with each other and with their children and, as Martin put it, to remain parents beyond the breakup, (Martin, C., 1997) which would certainly facilitate for family members a better adaptation to life after divorce.

5- Finally if the figures of fatherless and motherless children and/or those from broken homes are considered, it is difficult to accept the assumption in its generalized form that divorce negatively affects children and the rest of the family members. If all separations and all divorces led to serious psychological difficulties, society would have had an appalling problem on its hands. As shown in the following table, the number of divorces is so huge and so significant that if we were to accept the unconditional ill-effects of such experiences we would have found no proper social life.

Table No:1 : Divorce statistics of some countries²

Country	Number of Divorces per 1,000 Population	Year of Data	Population in 2022	Number of Divorces ³
Kazakhstan	4.6	2021	19,205,043	83 343
Russia	3.9	2020	145,805,947	568 643
China	3.2	2018	1,448,471,400	535 9344
Ukraine	2.88	2020	43,192,122	124 393
United States	2.7	2020	334,805,269	903 974
Egypt	2.3	2019	106,156,692	244 160
Saudi Arabia	2.1	2020	35,844,909	75 274
Canada	2.1	2008	38,388,419	80 615
South Korea	2.1	2020	51,329,899	107 792
Iran	2.1	2019	86,022,837	180 648
Australia	1.9	2019	26,068,792	49 530
Spain	1.9	2019	46,719,142	88 766
France	1.9	2016	65,584,518	12 4610
Malaysia	1.8	2019	33,181,072	59 726
Netherlands	1.7	2019	17,211,447	29 259
Poland	1.7	2019	37,739,785	64 157
United Kingdom	1.7	2017	68,497,907	116 446
Germany	1.7	2020	83,883,596	142 602
Japan	1.7	2019	125,584,838	213 494
Romania	1.6	2019	19,031,335	30 450
Algeria	1.6	2013	45,350,148	72 560
Turkey	1.6	2020	85,561,976	136 899
Italy	1.4	2019	60,262,770	84 367
Thailand	1.4	2005	70,078,203	98 109
Brazil	1.4	2009	215,353,593	301 495
Syria	1.3	2006	19,364,809	25 174
Mexico	1.3	2019	131,562,772	171 031
Ecuador	1.1	2006	18,113,361	19 924
Uzbekistan	0.8	2020	34,382,084	27 505

² -Adapted from Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divorce_demography (page last edited on 3/02/2022 , at 23:57 (UTC).)

³ -An estimated figure calculated by multiplying the overall population number of each country by the number of divorces per 1000 people divided by 1000.

Chile	0.7	2009	19,250,195	13 475
Venezuela	0.7	2017	29,266,991	29 487
Colombia	0.7	2007	51,512,762	36 059
South Africa	0.6	2009	60,756,135	36 453
Peru	0.5	2019	33,684,208	16 842
Guatemala	0.2	2020	18,584,039	3716
Vietnam	0.2	2020	98,953,541	19 790

Given the large and growing number of children involved, the assumption of the absolute ill-effect and disruptive impact of divorce is overgeneralized and is not reflected in the reality of society and in the life of the majority of people with this degree of severity and magnitude (Rappaport, S.R.,2013). It seems that most of them could absorb the shock, and manage to resume their normal lives. Research indicates that many children experience short-term negative effects from divorce, and only a limited number of children remain under this effect for an extended period. (Kelly, J.B., 2000; Kelly, J.B., & Emery, R.E., 2003; Arkowitz, H., & Lilienfeld, S.O.,2013).

4- Conclusion

Divorce apparently causes psychological harm to both parties who will find it very difficult to adapt to the new life and may take them a long time to get rid of its effects. It also leads to a weakening of the bonds between children and parents and may result in a feeling of hatred towards one or both parents, feelings that will have a severe impact on the stability of their lives and deeply affecting their social upbringing and academic achievement. This may objectively reflect the situation of families which meet the minimum conditions for survival, in which case divorce will really deprive its members of the opportunity to improve their family life. But since many families do not meet the conditions that allow fathers and mothers to perform their roles at the minimum level and thus give meaning and significance to the survival of the family entity, wouldn't be rational and wise to give both spouses the opportunity to break the bond of a failed marriage and seek to build a new family? A failed marriage has no other remedy than divorce.

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