

REPRESENTATION OF DIVORCED WOMEN IN TEHRAN, IRAN: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF QUALITY OF LIFE

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ABSTRACT

The paper reflects how divorces take place in Iran more than ever before. Most of those emanate from the social and financial pressures that the divorced women are left to face. The event increasingly impacts the quality of life of such women. The survey shows that most of the divorcees were not satisfied with the deal since it is stigmatized in Iran as a whole. However, as the ideals and values relating to marriage are changing rapidly, the process is dissolving many marital bonds not only in Iran, but in many other traditional developing societies too. Common reasons found for the phenomenon include extra-marital affairs, or a second marriage of the husband, drug addiction of the spouse, suspicious nature often man etc. The research came to know that older people are socially and emotionally more flexible to solve marital conflicts, since there are fewer alternatives to their current relationships. Similarly, industrialization and urbanization too, found to be influential on the divorce rate. The survey examined 307 divorced women based on the main hypothesis that: "Divorced women's quality of life is highly affected by socio-economic factors".

Keywords: Marital conflicts. Social problems. Quality of life. Divorce indicators. Ideals and values.

Purpose of Study

Divorce, or so to say family dissolution as one of the complex social problems needs to be scientifically researched, and the vulnerability of which addressed. Therefore, the intended issue is sociologically useful and needs to be researched. While it is a global issue today, it needs to be nationally investigated as well.

The present study aims at contributing to the understanding of socio-economic differentials in family-dissolution risk by exploring the possibility that the effect of the socio-economic position of the spouse varies with the duration of marriage. The study uses several indicators of socio-economic position of the wives. Some of the indicators analyzed in the present study include age, age at the time of marriage, age at the time of family dissolution, duration of married life, number of live births, protection of child(ren) after family dissolution, causes of which, duration of separation before family dissolution, occupational status of the divorcees, sources of livelihood, state of housing, state of personal insurance, duration taken for the dissolution to be officially decided, counseling before family dissolution, receiving social work services after dissolution, divorcees' feelings after family dissolution, divorcees' idea about remarriage, receipt of dowry at the time of family dissolution, motivation of dissolution and the like, are some of the variables taken into account in this research. With the changing social and economic conditions, there has been a rise in the number of family dissolutions especially at age cohorts of 20-24 for the females and 25-29 for the males in Iran in recent years.

Introduction

Quality of life of the women of dissolved families is highly vulnerable so far as their socio-economic conditions are concerned. Family dissolution as a new phenomenon has become very common not only in the Western societies, but it is spreading in the non-Western countries too. Many social scientists are currently attempting to understand the factors contributing to family dissolution from social, economic, cultural and psychological dimensions (White: 1990). Levinger's (1976) framework distinguishes three categories of factors that individuals presumably assess when considering family dissolution: the attraction to the ongoing marriage, barriers to breaking up the marriage, and alternatives to the current marriage. The economic theory of marital instability provides a similar, but more formal rational choice framework (Becker et al.1977).

Some other influential approach guiding research on antecedents of family dissolution is the life course perspective (Aldous:1990; Bengston and Allen 1993). The possibility that family-dissolution determinants interact with individual time is highly plausible: The significance of marriage as well as the consequences of divorce for the individuals involved

presumably vary over various stages of marital lives, and antecedents of divorce can be expected to vary accordingly (South & Spitze:1986).

It is worth mentioning that there is a possibility of the effects of spouses' socio-economic position on the risk of family dissolution that varies with the duration of marriage. However, socio-economic effects of family dissolution is not the same everywhere, but is different from one region to another. Knowledge of the interactions between the duration of marriage and the socio-economic position of spouses might help understand the processes by which the socio-economic factors exert their impacts on the risk of family dissolution (Morgan & Rindfuss:1985). Moreover, knowledge of these interactions would inform us about the socio-economic determinants of family dissolution in midlife and later life (Booth et al.1986).

The lower incidence of family dissolution in longer marriages and among older spouses is likely to be the result of several factors. One potentially important reason is friction between the spouses; meaning that marriages with the highest probability of dissolution are ended first, and therefore, the proportion of divorce-prone marriages is smaller among marriages of longer duration (Thornton & Roger: 1987; Vaupel and Yashin:1985/1993). Similarly, when the marriage of long duration represent earlier cohorts, their high stability may be partly specific to the generation rather than the duration of marriage or ages of spouses (White and Booth:1991).

Further, there are theoretical reasons to expect that the actual propensity to family dissolution declines as spouses age and marriages last longer. Socio-psychological explanations suggest that older people are socially and emotionally more mature and personally stable, and therefore more able to avoid or solve serious marital conflicts than younger people. That is to say, older spouses are less likely to undergo rapid individual changes, and this limits the chances that the expectations and views of the two spouses will diverge (Morgan and Rindfuss: 1985), and that older people put a higher value on stability than younger people (Booth et al. 1986). The social exchange theory posits that older spouses have fewer alternatives to their current relationship, and because they have less time to enjoy any benefits that might follow from family dissolution, the expected future benefits compare less favourably with cost of family dissolution (Ross and Sawhill:1975).

Similarly, the costs of family dissolution should be higher for couples that have been together for a longer time; because over time they tend to have made many tangible and

intangible marital-specific investments (Becker et al. 1977). They usually act as barriers to family dissolution. In order to ensure establishment of good governance and the rule of law in any country (Panday:2013), women should be represented in policy institutions and policy processes equal to men. So, if women are involved in problem-solving of couples, divorce rate is likely to decline. However, qualities such as deception, dishonesty, suspicion, mistrust and pessimism contribute to divorce within families in Iran (Safaei and Montazerian: 1981). Due to these conditions originated in socio-psychological norms and values, family dissolutions are increasing in Iran more than ever before— recording plus 18 percent $(\frac{Div}{M} \times K)$. As measured in 2012, the highest frequency is related to men of age group 25-29 (National Organization for Civil Registration: 2012).

Socio-psychological Problems of the Divorced Women

Family dissolution being the tragic end of a marital relationship, it is an open indication of a rift in the family organization, breakdown of the marital bond, and the evidence of a desire to escape from the responsibility of marriage ties, and it merely gives a legal status to marriage already disrupted.

Family dissolution has been conceptualized in terms of multiple losses — loss of a valued social role, loss of an intimated relationship, loss of an adult household member, loss of a source of income, loss of a familiar residence and regular contact with children (Menagham and Liedereman: 1986). Family dissolution does not automatically end a material relationship. Thus, years of emotional and sexual closeness, mutual dependencies and ingrained habits of living together may create bonds too strong for a divorce to sever with a single stroke (Krantzler: 1973). Both husband and wife change from one status to another, and they have to readjust their emotional, personal, social and family life, and reorganize their relationships and friendships. They must become accustomed to a new relationship with their children whether they are separated from them, or have them within the family without the other parent.

It must be added that women of dissolved families have to undergo numerous hardships such as psychological problems, financial problems, societal reactions and problems of children if any. To ease or solve the financial problems of the divorced women

in the West, alimony maintenance must be paid to the ex-wife and the child(ren) by the former husband until she dies or remarries (Menon:1991).

Theoretical Perspectives

There are three main divorce theories used in the present paper, i.e.

- 1) **Symbolic interaction theory**, or symbolic interactionism indicates the symbols, or things to which we attach meaning. Basically, this says that any meaning may not, and probably isn't your meaning. It brings up that without symbols life would be so much different. Symbolic interactions explain an increasing rate of family dissolution in terms of the changing symbols of meanings associated with both marriage and divorce. Changes in people's ideas about divorce, marital satisfaction, love, the nature of children and parenting, and the roles of husband and wife have put extreme pressure on today's married couples. Under the social, economic and cultural conditions, divorces were rare in the past; say in 1950s and before. So, divorce had a huge negative connotation to it. Now, there are new laws, new values, different lifestyles etc. that makes it easier to get a divorce, and people actually celebrate divorces. Yet, it depends on the society wherein the divorce takes place — in industrial societies it is different from that of the non-industrial societies.

2) Functional Analysis Theory

The functionalist perspective is one of the major theoretical perspectives in sociology. It has its origins in the works of emile Durkheim (1858-1917), who was especially interested in how social order is possible and how society remains relatively stable. Functionalism interprets each part of society in terms of how it contributes to the stability of the whole society (Anderson:2009).

It is much related to *industrialization and urbanization*. The theory talks about how advancing in technology, new businesses, and more cities have had influence on the divorce rate. New technologies like computers, social networking, cell phones, dating websites etc. all contribute to the increasing rate of divorce regardless of caste, creed, religion and nationality. All these technologies are very contradictory. Technology, on the one hand makes our life so much easier, but, it also on the other hand can cause us to do bad things. However, with new technology comes new temptation and responsibility.

However, functionalists see divorce from a negative macro point of view. The functionalists would blame divorce on the failure of social institutions as opposed to investigating the individuals involved in divorce. Functionalism is all about promoting communication, cohesiveness and uniformity. The functionalist view would support traditional and historical family norms to reduce the divorce rate. However, with new technology comes new temptation and responsibility.

3) Conflict Theory

By that is meant authority and power. This theory is clear as day when you apply it to real situations. It is all about the haves and the have-nots; the ones with all the power, and the ones with little power. One can see it in a lot of marriages in which the man thinks that he should have power because he is the man and traditionally the man goes to work to provide for the home. This is also where the symbolic interactionism theory comes in (Symbols Attached to Words).

Methodology

The method that is adopted in the pursuit of a research study is very significant in order to make a scientific, unbiased and logical study. In order to determine "Impact factors of family dissolution in Tehran, Iran": theoretical arguments as well as empirical considerations were used in the present study. In the domains, divorced women's age, age at the time of marriage, age at the time of divorce, duration of married life, number of live births if any, protection of child(ren) after divorce, causes of divorce, sources of livelihood, divorcees' feelings after divorce, divorcees' idea about remmariage, motivation of divorce and the like are some of questions asked in the form of a designed questionnaire. Questionnaires inspired and developed on a theoretical model, were administered among 307 divorced women randomly found within the universe of study in different neighbourhoods of Tehran City. The addresses of whom were initially searched through neighbours and local agents. However, the questionnaires were completed in a face to face order. As it was not possible to reflect the full 28 extracted tables, they were represented in abridged forms. The research is mainly based on the hypothesis that: Quality of life of women of dissolved families is highly affected by socio-economic factors".

The questionnaire was initially pre-tested on 25 of dissolved families women. The field work of the study was conducted through meeting the respondents at their place of residence.

Discussion

So far, much has been written about family dissolution being on the rise in Iran in recent years. Conditions like the egos and inflexibility of younger couples, who seem less willing than their parents to stay in marriages that they are not happy with, contributes to it. Women can be left destitute after family dissolution even if their husband is wealthy. Many women in Iran stay in failing marriage for many reasons. Most of these emanate from the social and financial pressures that divorced women are left to face. However, a large number of family dissolutions are due to violence of different types. Similarly, extra-marital affairs, second marriage of the spouse etc. could be mentioned as most common reasons for domestic violence leading to family dissolution.

Inspite of all the above-mentioned hardships, many women do not want a family dissolution even if they have faced violence in their marital homes as they feel both finally and socially insecure outside the marriage. Moreover, in many cases, women claim that marriage affect their career opportunities, because they either cannot work after marriage, or are able to work in a limited capacity. In cases of family dissolution women should bear the burden of looking after their children single- handed. However, family dissolution leads to serious long-term economic problems for women with children (Maclean: 1991). Under such circumstances remarriage market must be encouraged.

As Yi (2007) puts it: "Two to three decades age, for example, family dissolution was shameful to the family. A divorced woman had a very low status, and had nowhere to go. Nowadays, a woman of dissolved family can take her child(ren) back with her to her father's house, and her kin will take care of them. Attitudes towards family dissolution have certainly changed a lot. But, we can explain this as something that has happened because according to Yi divorce affects an individual family member, and it will not destroy the family system. So, according to Yi, as long as family dissolution does not threaten the existence of the family system, it will be acceptable. Similarly according to Behfar (2012), shortage of acquaintance time among the young couples often contributes to marriage dissolution in Iran.

That is to say, arranged marriage in short course of time in which couples have not well understood each other, are more likely to lead to dissolution.

Findings

In order to see the socio-economic quality of life of the women, divorced in Tehran City where the frequency of family dissolution is the highest as compared with other parts of Iran, the data collected are tabulated and presented in the form of tables. As the presentation of full tables is not possible, some *abridged tables* are presented. As indicated in table1, the highest rates of family dissolution is observed among women aged 25-29 and 30-34.

Similarly, as table 2.1 indicates, 39.09 percent of our samples married below the age of 20, while 41.37 percent married at age 20-24. Out of 307 samples, 6.48 percent asserted their divorce under the age of 20, while 31.92 percent divorced at the age of 25-29. Table 2.3 shows that 45.28 percent of our samples had less than 5 years of married life. Table 2.4 indicates that while 47.23 percent of the samples had no child(ren) at the time of divorce, 25.41 percent has at least 1 child at the time of marital dissolution. Table 2.5 also shows that the cause of 28.99 percent of family dissolutions among the samples is violence. Likewise, in table 2.8, most of family dissolutions (52.44 percent) in this research were employed. Another table (2.9) shows that 39.74 percent of women of dissolved families in the present survey depend on their parents for their livelihood, while 44.95 percent depend on personal income for their daily expenditures. In another table (2.15), it is observed that 54.07 percent of the divorced women are satisfied with their family dissolution.

Table 2.17 shows that 43 percent of the samples studied are interested in remarrying, while 31.6 percent are uninterested in remarriage. In table 2.20, among the divorced women, in 31.03 percent of cases the husband did not want a baby, while in 48.97 percent of cases wife did not want to have a baby. Similarly, the cause of divorce in 48.53 percent of cases was found to be misunderstanding. Other abridged tables indicate some of the other variables of family dissolution within the samples of the study.

**Table1: Classification of Dissolved Families Women
by Age in Tehran City**

Age	Number	Percentage
Total	307	100

Under the age of 20	10	3.26
29-24	31	10.1
25-29	69	22.48
30-34	70	22.8
35-39	48	15.64
40-44	39	12.7
45-49	23	7.49
Age 50 and above	17	5.54

**Table2: A General Sociological Perspective of Divorced Women
towards Various Related Indicators
“Abridged Tables”**

**Table 2.1: Divorced Women by Age and their
Age of Marriage Incidence**

Age	Total		Below Age 20		Age 20-24		Age 25-29		Age 30-34		Age 35-39		Age 40 and Above	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	307	100	120	39.09	127	41.37	45	14.66	11	3.58	3	0.98	1	0.33

**Table 2.2: Divorced Women by Age and their
Age of Family Dissolution Incidence in Tehran City**

Age	Total		Below Age 20		Age 20-24		Age 25-29		Age 30-34		Age 35-39		Age 40 and Above	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	307	100	21	6.84	80	26.06	98	31.92	49	15.96	29	9.45	30	9.77

**Table 2.3: Divorced Women by Age and the Duration of
their Married Life in Tehran City**

Age	Total		Less than 5 Years		5-9 Years		10-14 Years		15-19 Years		20 Years and Above	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%

Total	307	100	139	45.28	92	29.97	35	11.4	19	6.19	22	7.17
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Table 2.4: Divorced Women by Age and the Number of Children Delivered by Them in Tehran City

Age	Total		Without child		1 child		2 children		3 children		4 children and Above	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	307	100	145	47.23	78	25.41	50	16.29	23	7.49	11	3.58

Table 2.5: Women of Dissolved Families by Age and the Quality of their Children's Life after Divorce in Tehran City

Age	Total		Mother		Father		Nursery		Other	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	307	100	89	54.94	56	34.57	-	-	17	10.49

Table 2.6: Women of Dissolved Families by Age and Cause of Divorce in Tehran City

Age	Total		Violence		Infertility/ Impotency		Mental Illness (Husband)		Addiction		Adultery	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	307	100	89	28.99	24	7.82	63	20.32	68	22.15	63	20.52

Table 2.7: Women of Dissolved Families by Age and Duration of their Separation before Divorce in Tehran City

Age	Total		Not at all		Less Than 3 Months		3 to 6 Months		6 to 12 Months		12 Months and Above	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	307	100	66	21.5	59	19.22	57	18.57	56	18.24	69	22.48

Table 2.8: Women of Dissolved Families by Age and their

Occupational Status in Tehran City

Age	Total		Employed		Unemployed	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	307	100	161	52.44	146	47.56

Table 2.9: Women of Dissolved Families by Age and their Source of Livelihood in Tehran City

Age	Total		Parents		Pension		Personal Income		Secured by ex-Husband		Other	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	307	100	122	39.74	18	5.86	138	44.95	12	3.91	17	5.54

Table 2.10: Women of Dissolved Families by Age and their Housing Status in Tehran City

Age	Total		Owning Accommodation		Tenant		Living with Parents		Other	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	307	100	53	17.26	84	27.36	159	51.79	11	3.58

Table 2.11: Women of Dissolved Families by Age and their Health- insurance Status in Tehran City

Age	Total		Holding Insurance		Not Holding Insurance	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	307	100	139	45.28	168	54.72

Table 2.12: Women of Dissolved Families by Age and the Duration Since Divorce Happened in Tehran City

Age	Total		Less Than 3 Months		3 to 6 Months		6 to 12 Months		12 Months and Above	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%

Total	307	100	70	22.8	100	32.57	72	23.45	65	21.17
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Table 2.13: Women of Dissolved Families by Age and if Official and Professional Advisory was Conducted within them Prior to Divorce in Tehran City

Age	Total		Yes		No	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	307	100	123	40.07	184	59.93

Table 2.14: Women of Dissolved Families by Age and How They Receive Social Work Services after Divorce in Tehran City

Age	Total		Yes		No	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	307	100	46	14.98	261	85.02

Table 2.15: Women of Dissolved Families by Age and How They Feel after their Divorce in Tehran City

Age	Total		Regret		Consent		Indifferent	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	307	100	57	18.57	166	54.07	84	27.36

Table 2.16: Women of Dissolved Families by Age and their Opinion about their Reunion in Tehran City

Age	Total		Interested		Uninterested		Indifferent	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	307	100	45	14.66	206	67.1	56	18.24

Table 2.17: Women of Dissolved Families by Age and their Opinion about Remarriage in Tehran City

Age	Total		Interested		Very interested		Uninterested		Indifferent	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	307	100	132	43	36	11.73	97	31.6	42	13.68

Table 2.18: Women of Dissolved Families by Age and if They Received Dowry/ Mahr at the Time of Divorce in Tehran City

Age	Total		Receiving Dowry/Mahr		Receiving Part of Dowry		Not Receiving Part of Dowry	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	307	100	72	23.45	79	25.73	156	50.81

Table 2.19: Women of Dissolved Families by Age and if They Are Eager to Work after Divorce in Tehran City

Age	Total		Eager to Work		Not Eager to Work		Looking Work but unavailable	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	307	100	199	64.82	58	18.89	50	16.29

Table 2.20: Women of Dissolved Families by Age and Reason of Not Having Issue(s) in Tehran City

Age	Total		Husband Did not Want Baby		Wife Did not Want Baby		Wife's Infertility		Husband's Impotency	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	307	100	45	31.03	71	48.97	12	8.28	17	11.72

Table 2.21: Women of Dissolved Families by Age and the Cause of their Divorce in Tehran City

Age	Total		Poverty		Social Disorganization		Misunderstanding		Others' Interventions	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	307	100	35	11.4	70	22.8	149	48.53	53	17.26

Table 2.22: Women of Dissolved Families by Age and the Motivation of Divorce within them in Tehran City

Age	Total		More Comfort		Remarriage		Prevention from Not Having Baby		Access to Better Life	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	307	100	150	48.86	23	7.49	5	1.63	129	42.02

Table 2.23: Women of Dissolved Families by Age and the Strengthening Drive/ Motivation within them in Tehran City

Age	Total		Spouse's Addiction		Mental and Physical Injury from spouse		Family Pressure		Unethical Behavior of Husband	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	307	100	66	21.5	131	42.67	62	20.2	48	15.64

Table 2.24: Women of Dissolved Families by Age and the Rate of Sufferings within Them after Divorce in Tehran City

Age	Total		Losing Spouse		Undesirable Pressures/Injuries to Children		Losing Guardian/ Support		Rejoining of the Nears	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	307	100	52	16.94	98	31.92	43	14.01	114	37.13

Table 2.25: Women of Dissolved Families by Age and the Quality of Social Networks after Divorce within Them in Tehran City

Age	Total	Decline of Relations	Increase of Relations	More Freedom	Move Social Limitations
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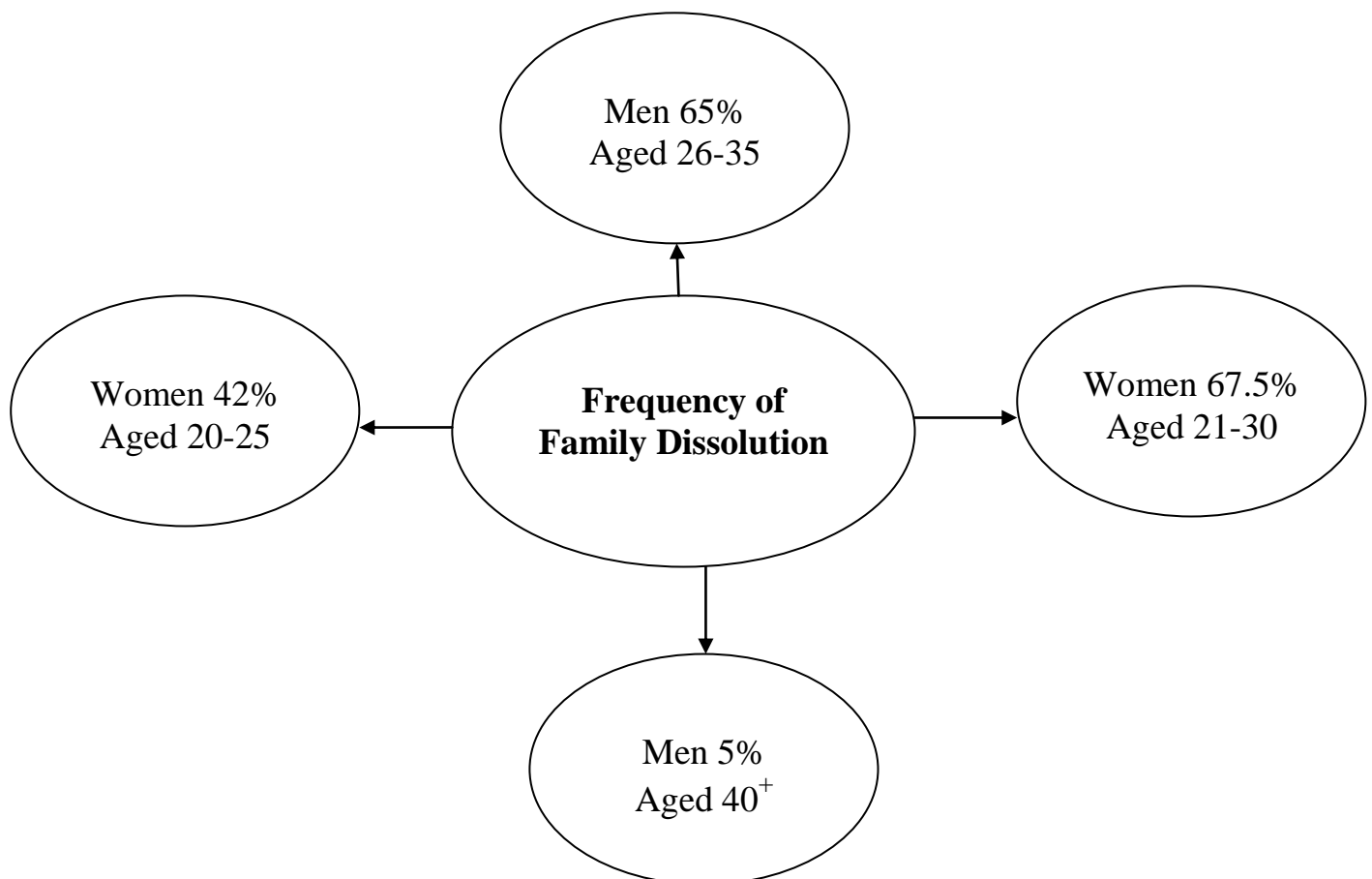
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	307	100	105	34.2	67	21.82	88	28.66	47	15.31

**Table 2.26: Women of Dissolved Families by Age and Impact of Interventions
Leading to Divorce within Them in Tehran City**

Age	Total		Spouse Family		Your Own Family		You Yourself		Friends	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	307	100	78	25.41	74	24.1	147	47.88	8	2.61

Family Dissolution Model 1.

Age of the Spouse at the Time of Divorce



Family Dissolution vs Social Reactions

Social reactions towards women of dissolved families is different depending on cultural values of the society. The future of the women of dissolved families depends highly on how they are received by their families, and what support they are prepared to give them in countries like Iran, India and other Middle Eastern traditional societies. A study done in India reveals that 83.7% of the respondents went back to their parental home. But they are not always welcome there due to the following reasons:

- Once the daughters are married off with the dowry, and the expenses born by them, the responsibility of the parents are considered to be over.
- In those cases where the parents are living with their other children, supporting a once-married daughter with her child(ren) is considered an additional burden.
- Family dissolution would also reduce the future prospects of marriage for other members in the family, especially the females.

But, inspite of all the above reasons, the respondents have a feeling of security and respectability in their parental home (Devi:1998). However, such women of dissolved families are usually treated with sympathy and pitied by the parents. While social reaction towards family dissolution is somehow normal, it does not receive the approval of societies such as Iran; for it represents failure in highly valued relationship (Chester: 1977).

Consequences of Family Dissolution

The consequences of divorce are many and grave. Between birth and death of a person, the most important event in life is marriage. Marriage changes the personalities, the attitudes, and the life-style of men and women. While marriage is entered into with great hopes and expectations, on the other hand, family dissolution is the failure of marital life, and therefore, it has serious repercussions on the individual, family and the community. Many researches and observations have shown that the negative results of family dissolution are perhaps more than the positive ones. In a way, family dissolution brings about personal, familial, and social disorganization. In family dissolution, it seems in the majority of the cases that, the impacts are more severe for the wife rather than for the husband (Baber:1953).

Family dissolution creates in a way a crisis situation of course, the intensity of the crisis is felt by different people in different ways such as: (i) men and women, (ii) young and

old, (iii) marriage of short duration, and those of longer duration. In cases where children are present, the parent who retains the children experiences less of a crisis than the one who is cut off from both the former mate and child(ren). Frequently, one member of a couple of a dissolved family may be more emotionally involved, more dependent, and suffer more emotional disturbance than the other, and this tends to prolong the crisis more for one than the other.

Family dissolution is probably one of the most stressful events that individuals may experience in their personal life. Divorced people tend to experience increased depressive feelings over time (Menaghan & Lieberman: 1986). The transition of family dissolution brings a change in life conditions that has depressive consequences. Similarly, Weitzman (1985) in a study of divorce for women and children in America finds unequal economic and social consequences of divorce for men, women and children. Weitzman's study shows that family dissolution causes a more downward economic and social mobility for women and children than for men in America. According to his study, reduction in income after divorce frequently results in inferior residence, move to less recreation and leisure, and intense mental pressure due to inadequate time and money. These factors may lead to extreme social consequences for women and children. Women's economic hardships lead to social dislocation and loss of emotional support and social services, and to intense psychological stress for women and children (Weitzman: 1985).

However, his findings also show that despite many pervasive economic and social consequences of family dissolution, women experience a rise in competence and self-esteem during the first year after their family dissolution. The majority of Weitzman's informants found themselves functioning better in life than during their marriage. Thus, he finds a portrait of simultaneous resilience and resourcefulness of American women following their divorce. It is generalizable to other industrial countries too. Kitson and Morgan (1990) argue that the consequences of divorce are multi-dimensional and may vary according to gender, ethnicity, lifecycle, social support, social networks and continued attachment to ex-spouses. However, there are probably psychological and physiological risks for the dissolved families and separated as compared to single, and often widowed (Kitson and Morgan: 1990).

Family dissolution in Developed Nations

The role of social and demographic factors are highly important as correlates on marital dissolution not only in developed countries, but in developing countries too. Of the given factors, race, age and religious service are known to be the strongest correlates with special reference to the developed countries, and as explored in the US. Low social integration of different socio-demographic categories is responsible for increasing numbers of these divorces (Glenn & Supancic: 1984). Other factors playing role in family dissolution increases in post-war period in countries such as Great Britain, have been the women's opportunity of labour force participation and technological development in fertility control (Smith:1997). Thus, women's change of economic opportunities have highly influenced the rate of family dissolution not only in developed world, but in developing world too, but in smaller rates.

Similarly, unexpected rise of family dissolution in Australia in the 1960s and early 1970s has been due to demographic and socio-economic factors. Some of the other factors attributed to the divorce event/phenomenon have been greater longevity of marriages due to early age at marriage and rising life expectancy, rising expectations concerning the quality of marital relationships, women's growing capacity of economic independence, the principles of the women's movement facilitating demands for more egalitarian role sharing and emotionally fulfilling marriages, lengthening intervals between marriage and the first birth which facilitate the termination of unsatisfactory marriage, conflicts about when to forego the second income in order to have children, unfavourable economic conditions and declining religious adherence (Carmichael & McDonald: 1998).

In a study done by (South & Spitz: 1986) in America, the effect of the wife's education appears to decrease the probability of family dissolution in the early marital duration, but to increase in the later duration. Therefore, many researchers have found that modernization and urbanization processes weaken the stigma of family dissolution, and in turn increase family break-up (Ogburn & Ninkoff: 1955; Breault & Kposowa: 1987). As mentioned before, the emergence of urban-industrial economics and females' educational improvement have been identified as casually related to the rising level of family dissolution in Western societies. Such a phenomenon is penetrating Iranian society as well.

Conclusion

Family dissolution occurs when one or both partners have a strong desire to dissolve their marital relationship. It gives a legal change to marriage which has already disrupted.

But, more than being a legal problem, it is a tragic and traumatic experience. The very fact that so many women are divorced today shows that more and more people are viewing family dissolution as an escape from dissatisfactory marital relations. The taboo attached to family dissolution is slowly vanishing, but divorced women still have to bear the disapproval and displeasure of society, and are also stigmatized. They try hard to recover from their misfortune and restore balance into their lives, and most of them are found to succeed in this. The changing socio-economic conditions call for a need for the society to recognize the possibility of more family dissolutions in the future, and accept divorced women as they are.

While family dissolution is one of the forms of marital break-up, there are other forms like death and separation. However, family dissolution is almost a new concept among many communities such as Hindus in India. It also occurred to a lesser extent in Iran in the past. Some have stated that family dissolution creates disorganization, and therefore, divorce is a symptom of social disorganization. Some others have held that family dissolution is a sort of adjustment, and will help in the reorganization of the family. Studies have shown that most married people basically are opposed to the concept of family dissolution.

It may be concluded that several factors work together to create marital maladjustment. Thus, if joint family living, poor economic conditions, absence of freedom, demand of dowry (mahr), disparity in expectations and fulfillments, and disagreement in matter or spending money, of supporting other members of the family, all these, or several of these work together, and thereby psychological, marital and familial maladjustments can occur.

Except in cases of mutual consent, divorce is still a cumbersome and costly affair. Many a time, it is observed that a spouse who is not interested in legal decree of remarriage can prolong a case for years; thus wasting precious years of youth of the other spouse. Eventually, after divorce, men face relatively fewer problems as compared with women regardless of race, creed, religion, nationality etc. However, socio-economic indicators play a good role in family dissolution cases not only in Iran, but in other societies too. Similarly, the changing socio-economic conditions in Iran in the past two decades has contributed to the rise in divorce rate. Divorce also is followed by multiple losses and hardships including psychological problems, financial problems, societal reactions etc. In the theoretical section, three theories relevant to family dissolution, i.e. symbolic interaction theory, functional analysis theory and conflict theory have been discussed. Women of dissolved families almost

in all societies have to tolerate many pressures, while many have to stay in failing marriage, Out of the total 307 divorced women studied, 69 (22.48%) cases were at age group 20-24 who seem to be very vulnerable. As the data indicates, violence counts for 28.99 percent of the causes of divorces among our samples. As pointed out before, the effects of family dissolution are more severe for the wife rather than the husband. So, necessary and advisable precautions must be taken before it happens. Similarly, while marriage changes the personalities, the attitudes, and the life-style of both men and women, family dissolution also causes changes in those qualities.

Sociologically speaking, and as found out, modernization and urbanization processes weaken the stigma of divorce, and in turn they increase the number of divorces. However, after studying 307 cases of divorce in detail and randomly in different parts of Tehran City, the researcher feels that the real reason for family dissolution in many cases is lack of understanding and communication between the spouses. While marriage is an intimate relationship between a man and woman, if real love and understanding exist between the two people, difficulties and problems are overcome.

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