

The Impact of Divorce on Student's Academic Performance in Secondary School Students of Arba Minch Town, Ethiopia

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To cite this article:

Abate Ashenafi, Eyob Ayenew. The Impact of Divorce on Student's Academic Performance in Secondary School Students of Arba Minch Town, Ethiopia. *Education Journal*. Vol. 10, No. 3, 2021, pp. 78-82. doi: 10.11648/j.edu.20211003.12

Received: January 14, 2021; **Accepted:** March 10, 2021; **Published:** June 3, 2021

Abstract: Divorce has psychological, economical and social impact on the divorcees and their children. Children who experience their parents going through divorce often left susceptible to depression, acting out, and suffering in stress problem. When parents decide to divorce, their action can affect their children's psychological well-being. Hence, the main objective of the present study was to assess the impact of divorce on student's academic performance in Arba Minch town secondary schools. Moreover, it explores conditions that promote the academic performance of students. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed to achieve the research objectives. The study participants were 204 students from divorced parents, 4 school counselors and 10 divorced parents (student's parents). The students from divorced parents were taken using available sampling technique while divorced parents were conveniently taken and school counselor were taken purposively as samples. The students given questionnaire and face-to-face interviews were held with the divorced parents and the school counselors. Data from the quantitative survey were analyzed using percentage, mean, standard deviation and t-test. The qualitative data were analyzed using direct quotation. The paired t-test group comparison showed statistically significant mean difference on academic performance of students before and after their parental divorce. Students had higher academic performance before their parental divorce. However, there was no statistically significant mean difference across gender. It was recommended that appropriate care and support to enhance the psychological wellbeing of the children, prioritization children during and after divorce, and co-parenting after divorce were forwarded to enhance academic performance of these students.

Keywords: Academic Performance, Divorce, Impact, Secondary School Students

1. Introduction

Education is a vehicle for economic, social and political development. There has also been a growing commitment to education by government, individual communities and missionary bodies [1]. This commitment on the part of government and other non-state actors has extended to ensure that students are properly groomed and tutored on how they managed by their parents in an ever-changing world. According to Adebayo [2] to maintain academic expectations of the students is not only the concerns of colleges and universities; but also parents, teachers, and stakeholders. All are increasingly concerned with the academic performance of students as a measure of the effectiveness of higher

institutions. Students are the most essential assets for any educational institution [15]. Schools, colleges and universities have no worth without students.

Student's academic achievement plays an important role in producing the best quality graduates who would become great leaders and workers for the country and responsible for the country's economic and social development [13]. Academic achievement positively affects students in variety ways. For instance, productivity, intellectual skills, personal motivation effort on work, having prestige job, and career dynamism are positively related to academic success [11].

Academic performance is what a student is capable of achieving when tested or examined on what he/she has been taught [16]. To this end a combination of personal and

institutional factors, which are capable of influencing students' academic performance. Personal factors related to the individual's intelligence, knowledge and ability while institutional factors include family or parental influences, societal influences, school related factors such as student-teacher rapport, and teacher related factors like their accommodation and living conditions.

Among institutional factors, that affects academic performance of students; family/Parents are important in providing environmental, social and economic factors, which have powerful effects on pupils' academic lives. It has been documented that parents' stability lives, readiness to contact teachers about their children's improvement is possibly the first step to becoming involved in education [18].

Divorce has become commonplace in today's society. However, the impact of divorce on children education is not clearly profound. Divorce changes a considerable number of things in the child's life including possible changes in residence, relationship with parents, change in socio-economic standing and exposure to marital conflict [3]. With all these change in child's life, it is not surprising that substantial impact on the development and academic performance of the students. Academics are one of the most important aspects of a student's life.

Different research reports indicated parental divorce was negatively related with the academic performance of the children [2, 6, 9]. For example, Berlin [2] examined those children who grow up in an intact (stay with biological parents together), participated in school and discussed about children education, the children's subject issues and about their friends more than children who grow up in a single-parent family.

However, other researchers, [4, 5, 8] reported there was no statistically significant difference in academic performance between children in divorced and non-divorced parents. Amato and Keith [4] demonstrated that children from divorced families show similar levels of educational and occupational attainment compared to those from two-parent families. They conclude that parental divorce was not a predictor of failure of academic performance of students.

In the aforementioned research review, it seems that there were inconsistent results about the relationship between the study variables and present researcher was interested to investigate the issue further. Therefore, the objective of the present study was to examine the effect of parental divorce on academic achievement of children from divorced parents. This was done by comparing the student's performance before and after their parental divorce.

2. Methods and Materials

This study employed descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey design is appropriate to describe the existing phenomena including human behavior. According to Mugenda and Mugenda [14] the survey design is the best method available to social scientists who are interested in collecting original data for the purposes of describing a

population which is too large to observe directly. Both quantitative and qualitative methods (mixed method) were implemented sequential way. The quantitative was done first to collect data from students followed by the qualitative method. The quantitative method was dominant and the qualitative data was embedded in the quantitative analysis.

The population of the study was those students whose parents are divorced in secondary schools in Arba Minch city. The subjects investigated in this study encompass students from the divorced parents. To supplement the students' data; school counselors & student's parent were also participated. There was no complied data regarding students of divorced parents in secondary schools. The social workers custody investigation document indicated that 325 high school students separated from parents due to divorce cases in the last three years. Among 325 students, 184 were female and 141 male students respectively. Among these students, only 204 accessed by the researcher in collaboration with social workers, school counselors and homeroom teachers. The researcher took all of them as sample using availability-sampling technique. These samples fill self-administered questionnaire and divorced parents and school counselors interviewed with semi-structured interview

Students average scores before and after their parental divorce was collected and used as student's academic achievement. Besides, a semi-structured interview was conducted to gather qualitative data from counselors & divorced parents to triangulate student's response. The researchers used the SPSS version 20 to run both descriptive and analytical statistics and for analytical statistics, the researcher used a significance level of $p < .05$.

3. Results

The data were collected from 204 available secondary school students of divorced parents. Data was entered in to SPSS version 20 for the statistical output. Descriptive analysis including tables, charts, frequency distributions, percentages and mean and analytical statistics (t-test) were used. Respondents the responses were analyzed with the means of descriptive methods of data analysis such as and t-test were used. Whereas, the interview made with the key informants from divorced parents & school counselors recorded and analyzed through qualitative methods of data analysis.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents.

	Age				Total
	11-13	14-17	18-21	>21	
Male	18	59	15	3	95
Female	28	55	24	2	109
Total	46	114	39	5	204

As shown in table 1, 204 high school students of divorced parents were participated in the study. Among these, 95

(46.6%) of the participants were male and the remaining 109 (53.4%) were females. Regarding ages of respondents, table 1, shows that 46 (22.5%) of students of divorced parents were between 11-13 years, 114 (55.9%) of students were between the age of 14-17, while 39 (19.1%) were between the age of 18-21 years old. From this, one can understand that the majority of the respondents found in middle adolescents of developmental age. The demographic information also asked respondents with whom they are living. The finding from the data analysis is shown in the pie chart that follows;

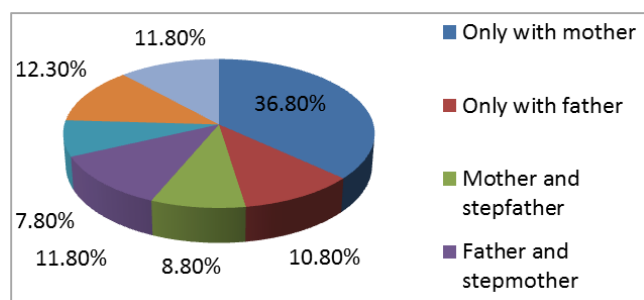


Figure 1. Students that are living with after their parental divorce.

Figure 1 shows that current living condition of student of divorced parents and majority of students 75 (36.8%) were living only with their mothers, while 25 (12.3%) were with grandparents.

The objective of this study was to investigate differences in academic performance of students before and after parental divorce. Hence, to measure the academic performance, one-year average score of students before parental divorce and a year average score of students after divorce were taken from school records.

Table 2. Academic Performance of the Students before Parental Divorce.

No	Student's scores	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percentage
1	41-45	2	1.00%	1.00%
2	46-50	11	5.40%	6.40%
3	51-55	28	13.74%	20.14%
4	56-60	28	13.74%	33.88%
5	61-65	35	17.16%	51.08%
6	66-70	34	16.67%	67.75%
7	71-75	31	15.20%	82.91%
8	76-80	24	11.80%	94.71%
9	81-85	11	5.40%	100%

Table 2 shows that 35 (17.2%) of the respondents had average score between 61-65, 34 (16.7%) had a average score between 66-70 while 31(15.2%) had average score between 71-75. Most students 191 (93.6%) of the respondents had average score more than 50% prior to divorce.

Table 3 shows the academic performance of students after divorce of their parents. Consequently, 38 (18.6%) of the respondents had average score between 51-55 and 56-60 while, 32 (15.7%) had average score between 66-70. In general 34 (16.7%) students were scored below 50%. Paired

t-test was calculated to see whether there is statistically academic achievement difference of students before and after divorce.

Table 3. Academic Performance of the Students after Parental Divorce.

No	Student's scores	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percentage
1	41-45	12	5.88%	5.88%
2	46-50	22	10.780%	16.66%
3	51-55	38	18.62%	35.28%
4	56-60	38	18.62%	53.90%
5	61-65	26	12.74%	66.64%
6	66-70	32	15.68%	82.32%
7	71-75	19	9.310%	91.63%
8	76-80	12	5.88%	97.51%
9	81-85	5	2.49%	100%

Table 4. Paired t-test on academic Achievement of Students before and after parental divorces.

Domains	Marital Status	Mean (M)	Standard deviation (SD)	P-value
Academic performance students	BPD	5.43	1.965	.000
	APD	4.50	2.016	

*=P < 0.05, df=203

BPD refers one-year average score of students before parents' divorce

APD refers one year average score of students after parents' divorce

The paired t-test result with respect to academic performance revealed that there is statistically significant mean difference in students academic achievement before and after their parental divorce, alpha (0.05), $p < 0.001$.

Table 5. Independent Samples T-test Analysis for Differences in Academic Performance Before Parental Divorce across Gender.

Domain	Sex	Mean(M)	SD	df	Sig.
APBPD	Male	5.29	1.945	202	.373
	Female	5.54	1.984		

An independence sample t-test was calculated to examine whether there exists a statistically significant gender differences in student's academic performance before/after their parents had divorced. Consequently, the independent t-test result shows, there is no statistically significant gender differences, alpha 0.05, $p = 0.373$.

4. Discussion

Parental divorce has great impact on student's academic performance. The comparison of research participants response, shows that there is a statistically significant academic achievement differences among students before and after their parental divorces. The academic achievement of students after their parental divorce gets deteriorated and decreased when compared to their performance before parental divorce [5, 12, 17]. Moreover, the variability in the academic performance of the affected students was largely explained by the influence of divorce.

Independent sample t-test was used to test the effect of divorce on academic performance of respondents across gender. other objective of this study was to examine whether

parental divorce has different impact on girls and boys. It shows there is no statistically significant gender difference on academic achievement of children in a divorced family. This research finding is inconsistent with other previous research reports [2]. Aemero in his research results indicated that males were received a substantially higher mean achievement than females. Similarly, Serkalem [18] stated that girls in divorced families' shows increased signs of depression, decline academic performance, and accumulate a higher percentage of drop-out rates compared to those boy students. The researcher believes that the finding of this study differs from previous researches due to time gaps. All the refereed research reports were done before six years ago and many things are being changed. In recent time, more attention is given for female students.

The Government, non-governmental organization, religious institutions, teachers, parents and other concerning bodies have been working together to address the problem of female students and to improve their academic performance. The government has been enforcing/implementing the gender equality in different states of the country. Affirmative action's in Ethiopia have imperative advantages to improve female students academic performance. It helps female students to cope up with their academic challenges and to minimize performance gaps. Furthermore, child justice project was established in recent years mainly ensure all action and decision of authorities, courts and legal bodies in child cases shall be made with regard to the best interest of the child.

5. Conclusion

Academic performance of students from divorced families was high prior to their parental divorce and dropped after their parental divorce. It concludes that parental divorce is one of the factors that affect academic achievement of students.

The result indicates that there was no statistically significant mean difference in academic performance between male and female students. Therefore, it can be concluded that parental divorce has no exceptional effect on children based on their gender.

Parent's effective communication during the divorce encourages the students not to down their self-esteem, providing appropriate care and support to enhance the psychological wellbeing of these children. Therefore, it can be concluded that children prioritization during and after divorce can enhance academic performance of these students.

6. Recommendations

Therefore, Arba Minch town women and children affair, Faith-Based Organizations or churches, Non-Governmental Organizations and Civil Society Organizations, traditional and public welfare as well as media institutions in the town should carry out public education to sensitize the people in the area on the menace of divorce.

The researcher strongly recommends that children priorities need to be placed at the frontline during the divorce process as they are adversely affected by divorce.

All schools should set up guidance and counseling offices facilitated by professionals to counsel students whose parents were divorced. This helps to take care of students with emotional needs that they wish to share in confidence about their home frustration, family breakup, educational aspiration, psychological disturbance and other personal issues.

The school principals, homeroom teachers and school counselors should identify students from divorced parents and make special attention to look their problems and establish support system.

Finally, a follow up study should be done to determine if the findings of this study can be verified by another similar study. Besides, there should be an extensive research on the impact of divorce on children's psychological and cognitive development.

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