

Emotional and Social Problems in Divorced and Married Women

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The present research aimed to compare emotional and social problems in divorced and married women. It was hypothesized that: divorced women are likely to experience more emotional and social problems compared to married women; there is likely to be a relationship in emotional and social problems in women; social support and socioeconomic status are likely to predict emotional and social problems in women. The sample comprised of 80 women (n=40 married women; n=40 divorced women). The Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS), UCLA Loneliness Scale, Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS), State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory (STAXI) and Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988) and Socio-economic status scale (Zafar, Joya, Kausar, 2013) were used for assessment. Independent sample t test, Pearson Product moment correlation and Step wise regression analysis were performed. Findings showed that divorced women experienced more depression, anxiety, stress, loneliness, social interaction anxiety and high level of state anger, anger out and total anger as compared to married women. Results also showed significant relationship between emotional and social problems in women. Results further showed that significant others social support predict depression, stress and loneliness and friends social support predict depression and loneliness in women. Further implications along with suggestions are being discussed.

Key words: emotional problems, social problems, divorced, married, women

Divorced women in Pakistan experience so many stresses such as emotional violations, redundancies, emotional incidents, severe physical illness and problems with their own and in-laws families than married women (Donnelly & Finkelhor, 2002). Single women suffers from a feeling of rage, anger, poor self identity after getting divorce. Most of the women feel rejection, insult, guilt, embarrassment, bitterness, nervousness and anger after their divorce. Financial constraints after divorce of husband are major stressors for the women to grow up their children and fulfill the basic needs of children such as three meals in a day, clothing, school fee and maintain expenses. All these women's problems are associated with child future problems such as emotional, social, physical and behavioral (Kotwal & Prabhakar, 2009).

Women's emotional and mental wellbeing is very important for complete and healthy development of a child. Children of emotionally maladapted women are at increased risk of developing emotional problems in the future than children living with intact families. A woman often experiences financial distress after divorce, because her husband's salary lost for her (Spillman, Lorenz, & Wickramma, 2006).

According to Gilman, Schneider and Shulak (2005) negative effects of divorce hurt women more than men because usually the custody of child becomes women

responsibility; they face financial hardships and face more problems in their lives. Further, In Pakistan women after divorce experience more emotional problems as compared to men because they are usually illetral and not able to earn for her children.

A predominant characteristic for a women in the period following divorce is emotional liability, with soaring emotional highs associated with freedom and prospects for personal development, a new challenging task to bring up children, alternating with crashing depression and anxiety associated with loneliness, loss and the uncertainty of the future (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 2001; Weis, 2001).

Divorced women experience a greater number of stressful events such as demotions, layoffs, critical illnesses and problems with their own parents than did married women. (Spillman, Lorenz, & Wickramma, 2006). Gerard, Krishnakumar and Buehler (2006) conducted a longitudinal research on post-divorce conflict, depression, and maladjustment in 30 divorced women. Over three years they found strong positive correlation between post-divorce conflicts, depression and maladjustment.

Dreman, Orr and Aldor (1999) compared sense of competence, time perspective, and self-esteem of married versus divorced women. Results of independent sample t tests showed that divorced women have lower sense of competence and self-esteem and higher sense of time perspective as compared to married women.

Averdijk, Malti, Ribeaud, and Eisner (2012) investigated aggression and internalizing behavior in a sample of 40 divorced women who were recently divorced and a second

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set of women which consisted of 40 women who were happily living with their husband. Divorced females were more aggressive, showed more state and trait anger as compared to their married counterparts. It was also revealed that divorced women used more abusive language than married women. In addition to anger divorced women were reported to be more depressed, report more anxiety and stress as compared to married women. Moreover, feelings of loneliness and rejection are reported more in divorced women. Ample research evidence showed that divorced and married women are significantly different in depression, stress, feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and anger (Ainsworth, 2007; Allison, & Furstenberg, 2009; Amato, 2001; Arditto, 2002).

According to WHO (2002) fifty five percent of women get divorced every year. In Pakistan, the trend for divorce is increasing due to economic pressures and societal demands. Increased problems in daily lives are making people frustrated and patience level of couple is very low. The present researched aimed to assess emotional problems like depression, anxiety, stress and social problems like loneliness, social interaction anxiety, and anger in divorced women. The study also aimed to compare two groups of women i.e. divorced and married, to see whether they differ on emotional and social problems. Further research aimed to investigate whether social support and socio-economic status predict emotional and social problems. It was hypothesized that: divorced women are likely to report more emotional and social problems as compared to married women; social support and socio-economic status are likely to predict emotional and social problems in women.

Method

Sample

The sample comprised of 80 women (n=40 divorced women, n=40 married women) and they were recruited through snow ball sampling. The samples across groups were matched on age, education and work status. For divorced women the inclusion criterion was: those who got divorced only once and were able to read and understand Urdu language (national language). Women who remarried and had adopted children were excluded. An inclusion criterion for married women was: those living with their husbands since the time of marriage and those who could read and understand Urdu language. Women were excluded who had been diagnosed with secondary infertility, had adopted children, and had high level of conflict with their husbands. Level of conflicts in families was assessed using conflict tactics scale (Straus & Douglas, 2004) and twelve women were excluded on the basis of high conflict.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Women (N=80)

Variables	Divorced women (n=40)		Married women (n=40)		t	P
	M (SD)	f(%)	M (SD)	f(%)		
Age	47.70 (5.55)		45.72 (5.50)		-.39	.69
Monthly income	39460 (23.50)		4 8956 (21.22)		2.93	.00
Education						χ^2
Primary		1(2.5)		3(7.5)	0.22	.86
Middle		8(20.0)		2(5.0)		
Matric		8(20.0)		8(20.0)		
Intermediate		13(32.5)		11(27.5)		
Graduation		4(10.0)		11(27.5)		
Post-graduation		5(12.5)		4(10.0)		
MBBS		1(2.5)		3(7.5)		
Working status						
Working		13(32.5)		13(32.5)	0.15	.65
Non-Working		27(67.5)		27(67.5)		
Occupation					0.23	.56
Teacher		8(20.0)		6(15.0)		
Lecturer		2(5.0)		3(7.5)		
Maid		1(2.5)		1(2.5)		
Doctor		1(2.5)		1(2.5)		
Duration of Marriage	24.10 (4.53)		23.60 (3.12)		3.44	.01
T Type of marriage					2.93	.13
Love marriage		6(15.0)		7(17.5)		
Arranged marriage		15(37.5)		12(30.0)		
With her agreement		17(42.5)		17(42.5)		
Without her agreement		2(5.0)		4(10.0)		

Assessment measures

Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS)

The DASS is a set of three item scale which measures the negative emotional states of depression, anxiety and stress. Each of the three DASS scales contains 14 items, divided into subscales of 2-5 items with similar content. Scores of depression, anxiety and stress are calculated by summing the scores for the relevant items. Respondents are asked to use 4-point severity/frequency scales to rate the extent to which they have experienced each state over the past week (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). It was translated in Pakistani National language (Urdu) for the present research.

Feelings of loneliness

UCLA loneliness scale is a 20-item scale designed to measure one's subjective feelings of loneliness as well as feelings of social isolation. Participants rate each item as 0-3. It has continuous scoring. Higher score indicated high level of loneliness (Russell, Peplau, & Ferguson, 1978). It was translated in Pakistani National language (Urdu) for the present research.

Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS)

The Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS) was developed to assess social anxiety. The SIAS is a 20 item measure on which respondent rate their experiences in social situations associated with social anxiety. Social Experiences are rated on a 5-point scale from 0 to 4. A total score of 43 or more indicates more social anxiety. Reversed score items are 5, 9, and 10 (Mattick & Clarke, 1998). It was translated in Pakistani National language (Urdu) for the present research.

State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory (STAXI)

State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory (Spielberger, 1999) was used to measure experience, expression and control of anger. This inventory has 57 statements and is divided into subscales State Anger Scale (SAS), Trait Anger Scale (TAS), Anger Expression-Out, Anger Expression-In, Anger control-Out, Anger Expression Index. In SAS, each statement has four response categories ranging from 1-4 (1=*not at all*, 2=*somewhat*, 3=*moderately so* and 4=*very much so*) and there are also four response categories for each statement. The scores of all items in each subscale were summed to get total scale score as well as the scores of all items of the subscales were summed to get grand measure score. The inventory has been translated by Kausar and was used after getting permission of the author.

Socio Economic Status

The socioeconomic status scale was developed by Zafar, Joya and Kausar (2013) for the current study. Kuppuswamy approach (Kumar, Petro, & Gupta, 1992) was used to develop socioeconomic status scale. The scale items were made on five dimensions education and job, living standard, recreational activities, social satisfaction and additional benefits and property. The scores from 100–122 indicates high socio-economic status, scores range from 75-99 indicate middle-upper middle, scores range from 60-74 indicate lower-middle, scores range from 50-60 indicates lower-upper-lower and score below 50 indicates lower socio-economic status.

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support

The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support is a 12-item, uni-dimensional tool to measure how one perceives their social support system, including an individual's sources of social support (family, friends, and significant other). This is 7 point rating scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Item no 3, 4, 8 and 11 assess family support, item no 6, 7, 9, and 12 assess support from friend, item no 1, 2, 5 and 10 assess support from significant others. High score indicates high level of social support (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988).

Procedure

First of all permission to use the scale was taken from respective authors then all those scales whose translated versions were not available were translated into Urdu. The researcher approached divorced women initially through

snow ball sampling strategy and their counter parts were taken from the same vicinity. After explaining the nature of the study, assuring potential participants of confidentiality, informed consent was taken from the participants. The participants completed questionnaires in the presence of researcher and it took about an hour to complete assessment. After questionnaire completion participants were thanked.

Results

Independent sample t test was carried out to compare divorced and married women on emotional and social problems. Pearson product moment correlation analyses were applied to examine relationship between emotional and social problems of women. Stepwise regression analysis was carried out to investigate social support and socio-economic status as predictors of emotional and social problems of women.

Table 2
Mean Differences in emotional and social problems of divorced and married women (n=80)

V	Divorced Women (n=40)		Married Women (n=40)		t	p	CI		d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
Depression	1.99	.23	1.39	.29	10.24	.01	.48	.71	2.29
Anxiety	1.98	.28	1.30	.25	11.52	.01	.56	.80	2.61
Stress	1.90	.23	1.17	.23	14.20	.01	.63	.83	3.21
Loneliness	2.07	.31	1.92	.26	2.27	.03	.02	.27	0.51
Social interaction	2.81	.37	2.64	.27	2.32	.02	.03	.31	0.52
State anger	3.10	.59	2.82	.45	2.39	.02	.05	.51	0.54
Trait anger	3.01	.38	3.02	.43	-.18	.86	-.20	.17	-0.04
Anger in	2.71	.56	2.56	.61	1.13	.26	-.11	.42	0.25
Anger out	3.17	.51	2.83	.62	2.61	.01	.08	.60	0.59
Anger control	2.64	.33	2.55	.43	1.06	.29	-.08	.27	0.24
Anger	14.69	1.16	13.78	1.42	3.08	.01	.32	1.49	0.69

Divorced women experienced significantly more depression, anxiety, stress, loneliness and social interaction anxiety as compared to married women. The results also showed that divorced women had more state anger, anger out and total anger as compared to married women.

Table 3
Relationship between emotional and social problems of women (N= 80)

V	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1.DEP	-	.611**	.40*	-.13	.10	.16	.18	-.19	.17	.32*	.18
2.ANX	.29	-	.39*	-.10	-.07	.41**	.06	-.08	.17	.12	.24
3.STR	-.23	.64**	-	.39*	.01	.22	.08	.04	.10	.12	.24
4.LON	.54**	.04	.71**	-	.09	.10	-.19	-.20	.11	-.00	-.06
5.SIA	.16	.14	.20	.63**	-	.00	.04	-.12	.27	-.01	.11
6.SA	.44**	-.09	-.01	.03	.41**	-	.04	-.18	.06	.30	.45**
7.TA	-.11	-.42**	-.35*	-.23	-.09	.43**	-	.08	.44**	-.38*	.43**
8.AI	-.17	-.30	.15	.52**	.26	.17	.36*	-	.26	-.00	.54**
9.AO	-.12	-.19	-.17	-.04	-.01	.08	.01	-.04	-	-.02	.74**
10.AC	.26	.09	.12	-.25	-.35*	.08	.09	.20	-.04	-	.21
11.A	.35*	.43**	.24	.38*	-.03	.27	.26	.24	.08	.32*	-

Note. Inter-correlations for divorced women (n=40) are presented above the diagonal, and inter-correlations for married women (n=40) are presented below the diagonal.

DEP=depression; ANX=anxiety; STR=stress; LON=loneliness; SIA=social interaction anxiety; SA=state anger; TA=trait anger; AI=anger in; AO=anger out; AC=anger control; A= anger **<.01; *<.05

The correlation analysis for divorced women revealed significant positive relationships in depression, anxiety, stress and anger control. Significant positive relationship was found between anxiety and state anger and stress and feelings of loneliness.

The correlation analysis for married women revealed a significant positive relationship of stress with anxiety, and significant positive relationship of loneliness with depression and stress. Results showed significant negative relationship between social interaction anxiety and loneliness. State anger was positively corelated with depression and social interaction anxiety. Significant positive relationship of anger-in with loneliness and significant negative relationship of anger control with social interaction anxiety was found. Total anger was also found to be positively corelated with depression, anxiety, and loneliness.

Further, Multiple regression analyses using stepwise method were performed by entering social support and socio-economic status as predictors of emotional and social problems in women. Separate analyses were conducted for depression, stress, anxiety, social interaction anxiety, anger and loneliness as outcome variables (table 4).

Table 4
Stepwise Regression Analysis for perceived social support and socio-economic status as predictors of emotional and social problems (Depression, Stress, Loneliness) (N=80)

Predictors	B	SE	β
Depression			
Constant	2.15	.31	
Significant others' support	-.19	.04	-.46**
Friends' support	-.14	.04	.34*
R ²	.29		
F	7.71**		
Stress			
Constant	2.28	.35	
Significant others' support	-.21	.05	-.46**
R ²	.26		
F	6.56**		
Loneliness			
Constant	2.41	.27	
Significant others' support	-.04	.04	-.86**
Family support	-.06	.02	-.29**
Friends support	-.11	.05	-.11**
R ²	.33		
F	.50**		

Results showed lack of significant others and friends' support emerged as significant predictors of depression in women. Stress was predicted by lack of support from significant others. Lack of support from significant others, family members and friends predicted loneliness in women.

Social support and socio-economic status did not predict anxiety, social interaction anxiety and anger in women.

Discussion

Divorce has a stigma attached with it. Society expects from its members to live in stressful units and divorce is mostly not appreciated. In Pakistan divorce mostly changes the status of a person has to face family, friends and society at the same time. Personal guilt, loneliness, sense of failure becomes more unmanageable when there are also problems like social acceptance, change in living pattern and economic problems (Blatt, Afflitti, & Quinlan, 1976).

The current findings showed that divorced women experienced more depression, anxiety, stress, loneliness and social interaction anxiety as compare to married women. Results also showed that divorced women had more state anger, anger out and total anger as compared to married women. Results are consistent with previous research of Kotwal and Prabhakar (2009) who found significant differences in depression and anxiety in divorced and married women.

Other research by Compas and Williams (1998) compared stressful coping and psychological regulation in divorced and married women and their children from age range 14 to 17. Single women reported more stress ful responses, positive coping, daily stressors related to financial stressors, family, and physical problems, and more psychological symptoms. The results are also consistent with researches of Broberg, Granqvist, Ivarsson and Risholm-Mothander (2006); Carlberg, 1994; Hetherington, Cox, and Cox, (1981) and Weis, (2001). Divorced women experienced a more stresses as compared to married women such as emotional distortions, criticism, emotional incidents, critical illnesses and problems with her family and her inlaws family (Kotwal & Prabhakar, 2009).

Divorce has detrimental impact on women. Role of both parental figures are important in child life for proper upbringing of a child. Divorce usually brings the departure of father from the home. Father's absence causes less responsive care, because women' time and attention are divided between making a living and caring for children. Single women tend to suffer from a feeling of rootlessness and lack of identity after divorce or widowhood (Clingempeel, Brand, & Ilevoli, 2004). In many women, feelings of guilt shame, resentment, anxiety and anger about the future are common. Financial crises after death or divorce of husband are a standing situation with most of the single women. It becomes difficult in meeting the basic needs of children such as food, clothing, and school fee, maintain expense. Single women are also unable to participate in much community, social organization. All these women' problems are associated with child future problems such as emotional, social, physical and behavioral (Crow & Crow, 2003).

Implications

The implications of this study point to the importance of making educational programs available for lower income and the lesser educated, single working women. The research will contribute to the existing body of knowledge related to divorce and family life. Intervention programs like psycho education for divorcee females can help to cope effectively with their stressful life events. Government and other competent authorities must play a role to help divorcee females for their survival like to provide financial aids to divorcee women, free medical facilities, healthy food and shelter. The study reinforces the importance of friends at work and family interactions. It would be important to make socializing with peers a strong component of these educational programs. Educators, especially those concerned with family relations and/or family resource management can help guide families to improve their life in different ways.

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Received: Feb, 28, 2014

Revisions Received: June, 1, 2014