

Causes of Early Divorce as Perceived by Young People in Sharjah: A Field Study

Fakir M. Al Gharaibeh

Associate Professor of Social Work and Social Policy

University of Sharjah

College of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences

Dept. of Sociology, Sharjah - U.A.E

E-mail: f.gharaibeh@gmail.com

Abstract

This preliminary study explores the causes for early divorce quoted by young men and women in Sharjah, UAE. Field analysis of the data collected through a questionnaire distributed to a convenience sample of 865 individuals was conducted. This analysis reveals that the main causes for early divorce, in order of significance, are: factors related to poor communication, primarily unwarranted interference by the in-laws (cited by 72% of the sample), followed by those related to the attitude and personality of the husband especially the display of a patronizing and dismissive conduct towards the wife as mentioned by 71.2%. Issues relating to the intimate marital relations between the couple are quoted by 70.6% of the subjects, only 0.6% higher than financial factors, the most prominent of which is the husband's extreme stinginess especially towards meeting family needs. This paper also proposes a number of recommendations based on the results of the field study that might be of interest to social workers and decision makers in family and social institutes in the UAE.

Keywords: Early divorce, Youth, Social Work, Family

1. Introduction

Like other societies in the Arabian Gulf region, the Emirati society boasts a highly cohesive social structure that is both rooted in old traditions and open to modern ideas. Its prevailing social mores adhere to its traditional customs and norms, all of which constitute a system regarded by all members as paramount to law. It then follows that marriage, as the only recognized basis to form a family, is an integral component of this system. Therefore, the Emirati society places a lot of importance on the institution of marriage, especially among family members or compatriots.

The Emirati society considers the family unit as an essential part of its social structure: a component that is significantly important to nation building and progress along its economic, cultural, religious and health systems. A typical Emirati family is an extended tightly knit unit. However, in addition to divorce the increasing number of unmarried women over the age of thirty is another factor that affecting the role of women (Al Gharaibeh, 2015a). A man may delay marriage without attracting criticism, but a woman who is still unmarried is viewed negatively by others in society (Al Gharaibeh, 2016).

Consequently, the phenomenon of divorce is viewed as a considerably alarming issue that families face at present. The Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority's 2015 report cites 2,650 divorce cases of Emirati nationals in the same year, 128 fewer cases than the previous year. The

number of registered marriages in the same year reached 9,215 as opposed to 9560 the year before. The report also shows that in 2014 the highest number of divorce cases were in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Sharjah whereas in 2015, the highest numbers occurred in Abu Dhabi (1090 cases), Dubai (781), Ras-Al-Khaimah (328 cases), followed by Sharjah with 245 cases.

Figure 1: Number of divorce cases of Emirati nationals by Authority Federal Competitiveness and Statistics in 2015

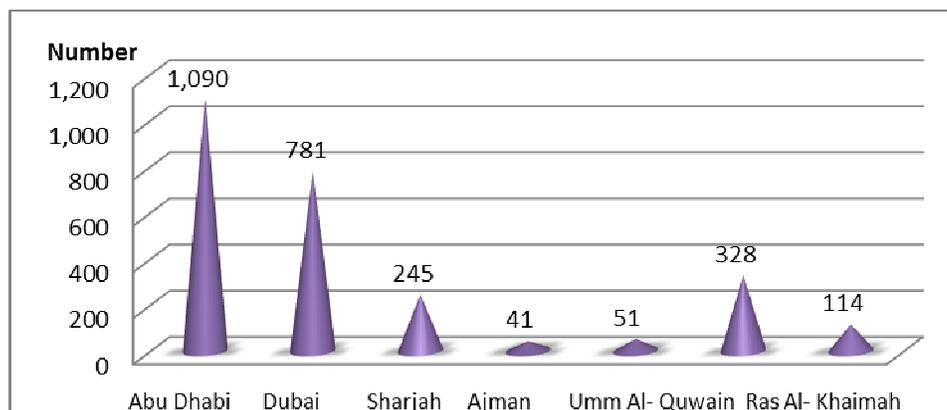
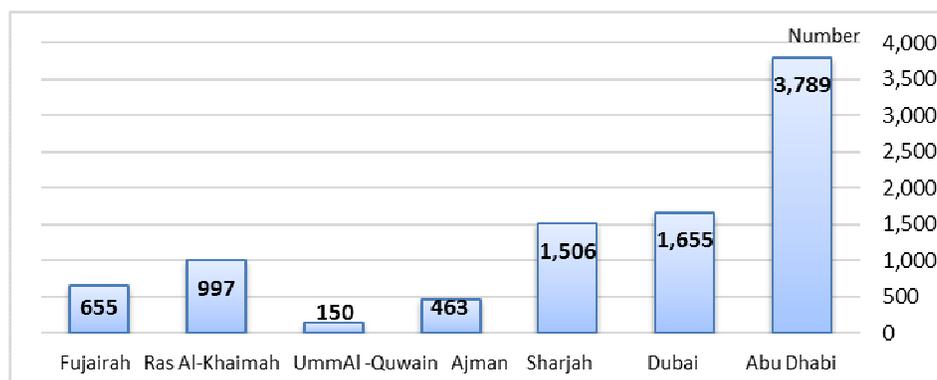


Figure 2: Number of registered marriages of Emirati nationals by Authority Federal Competitiveness and Statistics in 2015



In addition, the recent census conducted by the National Centre for Statistics in 2013 shows that the rate of marriages of Emiratis to non-nationals in 2012 was 22.2% in the case of Emirati males compared to 13% in the case of females. The total number of registered marriages of Emirati males to female compatriots reached 7411 in the same year (National Centre for Statistics, 2013).

2. Family Systems and Familial Cohesion

A healthy family is characterized by its adaptability; a product of the family's flexible balance of power, shared leadership, positive reinforcement, and encouragement of its members to engage in negotiation and discussion. It is an interactive unit that develops its own suitable rules, clearly defined roles and an open structure. A healthy family shows awareness of its environment, as it believes the world to be fathomable and structured. Its members are expected to contribute to its world views while open to advice and assistance from the other members. Overall, they are flexible and able to jointly face conflicting and confounding situations and seek alternative solutions. It is the absence of these features that often leads to conflict and divorce.

Like any other society, there are three main family systems in the UAE (Charles: 2009). These are:

Open Family System. Open families have flexible rules and role definitions, and functions in a democratic manner.

Closed Family System. A closed family is regarded to be a conservative unit that allows little external contact.

Random Family System. This is often viewed as the typical dysfunctional family. It is the family type that suffers tension and discord more than any other family type due to the apparent absence of clear family rules and regulations.

There are various factors that enable a couple to avoid conflict and build a healthy family including careful free choice of the future partner where each would seek the most desirable characteristics such as wealth, social status or physical appeal as well as good manners, religious leaning and good upbringing. Other factors include compatibility in age, social status, education, worldviews, moral standards, life goals, and personality traits especially in regards to their views on marriage and expectations from this relationship based on their own observations and direct personal experiences.

A marital relationship can be strengthened through keeping certain standards such as love, establishing open communication channels and maintaining a close enjoyable physical contact. Other factors include sharing views on work and raising children, as well as traits such as flexibility and realism that can help them avoid early divorce.

A healthy family enjoys a clear balance between cohesion and adaptability. Olson (1989) highlights eight characteristics of a cohesive family. These are:

- Attraction
- Personal differences and distinction
- Support and encouragement
- Attachment
- A sense of psychological security
- Family bonding and connectedness
- Care for physical hygiene and appearance
- Positive affective involvement

Based on an extended study, Beavers and Woolers (1983) defined healthy families as those units that have a parental cohesion where the expected performance of each family member is clearly defined. Members of healthy families are those who adapt to their feelings and ideas, communicate well with each other and expect dealings to be open, warm-hearted and reliable to avoid rows and conflicts that would lead to separation.

The Emirati family has undergone a number of changes in terms of the status and roles of women and men, in addition to the presence of servants. Also, it has started a process of transformation in structure from extended to nucleus because of the great development, which resulted from the emergence and well-planned exploitation of oil as well as other factors such as the changing status and role of women, the impact of social media on lifestyle and marriages to foreign women.

In the past, marrying foreign women was restricted to old, disabled or sick people who could not find spouses easily in the society (Al Nufaii, 2006). However, in recent years, although young people are mature, educated and socially well integrated, they tend to marry foreign women -- a trend that has resulted in a number of social and cultural repercussions in the structure of the UAE society, especially on family structure, which is evident from the increasing divorce cases of foreign women.

3. Aims of the Study

The oil boom and its subsequent changes in the life of the UAE society have led to many social changes in family structure, which is most evident in the emergence of a number of social problems

such as marriage to foreign women, household violence, problems of household servants and increasing divorce cases, especially early divorce in its various forms. Undoubtedly, divorce takes its toll on the cohesion and strength of both the society and the family.

Divorce's impact is not limited to women, but rather extends to men and children too. Divorce is a painful psychological and emotional experience for both men and women, as both of them are vulnerable to loss of self-confidence and loss of work. Moreover, they would shoulder the blame of the society where the word 'married' is replaced by 'divorced'--a term that is still stigmatized in many societies. This weakens the social status of each spouse, let alone the social stigmatization of the whole family, which is sometimes accompanied by blame and pity (Al Gharaibeh and Olimat, 2013).

The current study is primarily an examination of the causes of early divorce in the Emirate of Sharjah as perceived by young Emiratis based on a random sample of Emirati youth in the Emirate of Sharjah. Early divorce in this study is defined as 'a dissolution of marital relationship religiously and legally during the first three years of marriage by one or both spouses'. Specifically, the paper attempts to answer the following question: What are the main causes that lead to early divorce in the Emirate of Sharjah? This will be accomplished by achieving the following objectives:

- Identifying the characteristics of young Emiratis participating in this study
- Identifying the main causes of early divorce which include:
 - Reasons related to the husband's behavior and personality
 - Reasons related to the level of family communication
 - Reasons related to marital intimacy
 - Reasons related to family economics
- Identifying the relationship of demographic variables to the study domains

4. Significance of the Study

Marital life, which is characterized by family understanding and homogeneity, contributes positively to strengthening the psychological well-being of couples and family members. Despite the role of the family in maintaining the balance of society and its ability to ensure calmness and stability, it may contribute to disintegration and social separation in some cases due to divorce, which greatly affects individuals, families and the whole society, particularly as external influences on the family are in the increase.

This study is especially important as it focuses on the causes of early divorce in the Emirate of Sharjah, as official statistics indicate an increase in divorce rates in the UAE, especially in the early years of marriage. Moreover, the study endeavors to help social workers, family counselors and those who work in the field of family welfare to fulfill their roles in a scientific and professional way.

5. Background

Divorce is one of the most important social problems facing the Arab family compared to the Western family. Although divorce may lead to a better life for some families, it causes an emotional trauma that has a long-term effect on the lives of all family members. According to the Divorce Fact Sheet (2012) Sweden has the highest percentage of divorce rates (55%) compared to all other countries while Italy has the lowest percentage of divorce rate with 12% (Divorce Rates Around the World, 2012).

Divorce also has economic, health and psychological effects in particular stress, worry, loneliness, depression and illness on both spouses and their children (Coombs, 1999; Morowitz, 1975; Goodwin, 1987 Mooney et al. 2000). Global studies point out that children from divorced families are more vulnerable to suffering and depression compared to children from intact healthy families (Al Gharaibeh, 2015b, Al Gharaibeh, F and Bromfield, N, 2012) Chaselansdale and Hetherington, 1990; Zaslow, 1988; Franiuk, Cohen and Pomerantz, 2002).

In one of the latest and most comprehensive field studies in the United Arab Emirates, Al Gharaibeh (2014) studied the causes of divorce in the UAE society from the perspective of divorced female citizens, which was conducted with joint support from the University of Sharjah and the Marriage Fund Foundation in the United Arab Emirates. The study revealed that the causes of divorce in the UAE society are not fundamental. Rather, they mostly relate to the lack of understanding and communication, and the inability to develop daily interaction between couples, which leads to an exacerbation of the problems between couples.

Studies in the UAE society have come up with mixed causes of divorce but converged on many of the findings pertaining to family problems and disagreements leading to divorce. In a study conducted by Al-Zerad and Yasin (1987), it was found that marital differences leading to divorce occurred due to lack of family stability. The findings of Rashid et al.'s (1998) study revealed many intertwined factors in the UAE family environment that cause divorce, the most important of which are parents' intervention, lack of commitment to family duties, and the husband's reluctance to spend on his family.

Another study carried out by the Family Development Centers in Sharjah (2008) on divorce revealed that 33% of the divorcees are under the age of 30 (who are still young) and that the highest percentages pertain to divorcees between 30 and 39 years (41%), followed by divorcees aged between 40 and 49 years (26%). Results also showed that the highest rate of divorce was for marriages that lasted 7 years and above, touching 24% of all divorces. This is a serious indicator that a long marital companionship does not preclude divorce. This is followed by divorce among those who have been married from 1 to 3 years (22%) and divorce before marriage consummation (10%) besides divorce during the first year of marriage (15%). Taken together, these statistics indicate a lack of adequate planning to face the emerging economic and material burdens, an inability to make sure that both spouses fit each other and an inability to understand each other's circumstances (Family Development Centers, 2008).

The study also showed that the total divorce rates were increasing as the level of education increased in the first three stages (primary, preparatory, secondary), with the highest rate at the secondary level (30%), which decreases slightly for holders of university degrees. It is worth noting that 28% of the divorced women do not have any income, i.e. they are unemployed. Also, it was shown that bad companionship was a direct cause of divorce, as reported by half the sample of the divorced women. The study also reported that 22% of divorced women confirmed that the reason for divorce was polygamy, while about 10% of them asserted that low income and the husband's reluctance to spend on the household was the cause of divorce (Family Development Centers in Sharjah, 2008).

The study also revealed that a large proportion of divorced women find it difficult to integrate into society after divorce as they lack adequate psychological and social care services. They also complained that they urgently needed social and psychological services as the aids they receive are limited to financial benefits and 77.6% of divorcees whose age was below 40 years received the minimum amount of social benefit (2,815 dirhams per month). The study also indicated that there were no programs to rehabilitate divorced women economically, socially, psychologically, and financially (Family Development Centers in Sharjah, 2008).

The results of Al-Abbar's study (2004) identified four main reasons for divorce in the UAE society, in order of importance: marital maltreatment, economic reasons, personal and social reasons, and finally health reasons. The results of Al-Malki's (2001) study, which had a random sample of 310 divorced women in the UAE society, showed that 78% of the sample confirmed that the husband's addiction to alcohol and drugs was the cause of divorce while 50% of them indicated that bad companionship was the direct cause of divorce; 57% attributed divorce to parental intervention, whereas 43% attributed divorce to sterility.

Rashid et al.'s (1998) study revealed many interrelated causes of divorce in the UAE family environment. Chief among which were the husband's alcoholism, bad companionship, lack of sincerity and loyalty to the wife, wife's desertion of the marital home, husband's desertion of his wife,

polygamy, parental intervention, lack of commitment to family duties, and husband's reluctance to spend on his family.

In In Oman, Amal Abdeen (2007) conducted a study to explore the psychological and social causes and effects of divorce based on a sample of 100 divorced women. She identified 22 factors where parental intervention accounted for 36% followed by lack of verbal and intellectual communications (32%), and recklessness (28%).

Another study was conducted in Saudi Arabia by Tharwat Shalabi (1990), who studied a random sample of Saudi males and females. It was shown that there was a positive correlation between social change factors and divorce causes. The most important factors were women's jobs, changing values and spouse's travels.

The studies of Abdul Jalil and Al-Sibai (2006), Al-Khatib (1993) and Al-Faisal (1991) concluded that the causes of divorce in Saudi society were due to the following factors: marital aversion, maltreatment, age differences, sexual intimacy, early marriage, traditional, arranged marriages, (where fiancées are not allowed to see each other before marriage), differences in character, differences in educational levels, number of children, failure to determine the age of marriage and the change in educated women's self-image which is not accompanied by a change in the society's view of them. Their study also indicated that the divorce rate was higher among the illiterate than among the educated. Similarly, the rate was higher among couples aged below 30 and divorce increased in the first years of marriage.

Although official statistics do not indicate a significant rise in divorce cases compared with the cases of marriage as mentioned at the beginning of the study, there is an urgent need to examine divorce cases and identify their causes so that we can better address and curb this phenomenon in order to build a strong, cohesive family. This is especially important because the majority of previous studies dealt with divorce in general in terms of its causes and effects on the family and society. Unlike previous studies, the current study focuses on the causes of early divorce (excluding divorce in later years) in the Emirate of Sharjah only.

Several researchers in the United Arab Emirates and other Gulf countries attributed divorce to many factors, such as poor marital choice, psychological, physical and social mismatch between spouses, extreme jealousy, sexual incompatibility, lack of desire, impotence, maltreatment, cruelty, marital conflicts or personality disorders of one or both spouses, which could result from a personal distress such as childhood frustration caused by a bad model exemplified by parents' divorce. Other reasons included husband's stinginess or greediness for his wife's wealth, the intervention of parents and others in the family affairs, a chronic disease inflicting the husband or the wife, wife's neglect of her husband or household duties, financial problems, severe pressures and tensions as well as poor choice of spouse and huge differences between the spouses in terms of age, social, cultural and economic levels, rendering understanding between spouses more difficult.

As was laid out in the review of previous studies on divorce, there are various causes of divorce in the UAE society stemming from marital disorder, which is accompanied by adverse circumstances that take their toll on both the family and society. However, this study is different in that it is entirely devoted to the causes of early divorce in the Emirate of Sharjah; its objectives are more comprehensive, and it draws on multiple resources, which come from the National Center for Statistics and the Shari'a Courts. It is also based on the findings of a series of studies conducted by the researcher on divorce in the UAE society. Finally, the field sample of the study comprises both male and female young people in the Emirate of Sharjah.

6. Theoretical Framework

Social theories provided a range of social, economic and cultural explanations for divorce and its soaring rates. Most of these factors relate to modern civil life that contributes to weak families and marital ties. Some of these Arab explanations (Morsi, 1991) are:

- Individualism and self-actualization of one or both spouses, which led to weakening the values of altruism and sacrifice, which are the cornerstones of marital life
- Changing the laws of marriage and divorce that give the individual freedom to marry and divorce making men and women less able to stand the difficulties facing marital life and therefore resorting to divorce for simple reasons as in the case of a no-fault divorce at the instance of the wife, custody of children, etc.
- Economic, political and social difficulties and crises facing the family.

To form a healthy family that would help reduce the chances of conflict and divorce, some trends examine the importance of the impact of socioeconomic structures such as class affiliation, economic, religious and ethnic aspects, as well as personal traits from a cultural perspective in addition to other demographic variables such as gender and age differences (Feldman, 1994).

A number of social theories came up with possible explanations for divorce, which could also apply to divorce in the Emirate of Sharjah. Talcott Parsons adopts the structural functional approach to explain social phenomena. He sees that the social system consists of a group of interrelated social roles that individuals perform in their interactions with each other to achieve their goals within a well-defined and agreed cultural framework. He adds that a social system is a system of interaction that determines what is legitimate and acceptable between a large number of individuals who are oriented toward a situation and common understanding (Naim, 1986).

The functionalist theory holds that the society consists of several components, and each component has certain characteristics and a function that is determined by its service to the other parts, and that these parts of the society hold together by interdependence and agreement on certain things such as values, ethics and norms, and that any change affecting any part would in its turn effect a change in the rest of the parts (Ibrahim 1989).

The theory of social exchange is based on exchanges between parties within a social and human context, where the behavior of individuals is based on the motivation of self-interest. Therefore, individuals, who have a number of alternatives, search for things and relationships that benefit them, searching for the maximum benefit and the minimum cost in their interaction with others. Social exchange is organized through individuals' expectations, acceptance and justice standards. Therefore, we expect other individuals to meet our needs if we try to meet their needs based on what is right and fair for each of us (Blau, 1964)

All social acts are based on mutual benefit. Marriage is a system based on benefit, and couples look at each other in terms of good qualities and bad traits that they see in each other. That is, the more prominent the good qualities are in one of the spouses, the more positive and attractive aspects associated with the material and moral aspects are. In contrast, when these aspects are not present, partners would not benefit from the status quo and hence the tendency to end the relationship and divorce. That is, the benefits related to family communication, husband's behavior and personality, intimacy as well as family economics in the current study are all indicators of the availability and adequacy of benefits for one or both spouses, affecting the continuity or termination of the relationship by one or both spouses as will be evident in the analysis of the results.

7. Methodology

This study adopts an analytical descriptive approach. The population of the study consists of Emirati youth aged between 18 and 30 years.

Sampling and Data Collection

A convenience sample of 865 young male and female Emirati youth in universities, youth, cultural and voluntary centers, associations, and official and private institutions was selected in the Emirate of Sharjah to identify attitudes towards early divorce in the Emirate regardless of marital status.

To achieve the objectives of this study, participants responded to questionnaire items using a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 = “Strongly disagree” to 5 = “Strongly agree”). The questionnaire included the following topic areas/domains:

- Characteristics of the young Emirati respondents (4 items)
- Reasons related to husband's behavior and personality (15 items).
- Reasons related to the level of family communication (15 items).
- Reasons related to marital intimacy (15 items).
- Reasons related to family economics (15 items).

Reliability and Validity of the Study Tool

Evidence for the validity of the study tool comes from two sources. First, the researcher asked a group of academic specialists to verify the questionnaire and some items were modified while others were completely deleted. Second, the researcher tested the consistency of the measurement scales using Cronbach's alpha, which indicates the strength of the correlation between the scales, and is based on the consistency of the individual performance from one item to another. To assess the reliability of the study, again the alpha coefficient, which is a good indicator of reliability, was used. The Cronbach's equation was applied to the scores of the reliability sample. Although there are no standard rules for the appropriate values of alpha, a score of 0.60 is practically considered a reasonable value in humanities research.

These coefficients indicate that the tool generally has a reliability value of 0.98. This points to its ability to achieve the objectives of the study. The highest reliability value goes to the reasons related to husband's behavior and personality (0.96) while the lowest coefficient value relates to the reasons related to the level of family communication (0.94). These high coefficients indicate that the instrument is both reliable and valid and therefore safe to apply.

Ethical Considerations

It was emphasized that participation was voluntary, and that they were free to withdraw their consent and leave at any time. Verbal informed consent was obtained from all participants. Data were stored on password-protected computers in locked offices

Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis was carried out using the SPSS package. In order to answer the study questions, the means, standard deviations, item ranks, and their relative importance were found out. Also, Scheffe's Test was used to compare group means.

Limitations of this Study

Despite the importance of the results, this study has its own limitations. The current study has limited itself to the views of young people in the Emirate of Sharjah, so there is an urgent need to study the views of young people in the rest of the United Arab Emirates.

8. Findings

This section presents the results of the study, which aimed to identify the attitudes of young citizens towards the causes of early divorce in the Emirate of Sharjah.

The results shows that the female participants outnumbered the male participants (54%) were female while 394 (46%) were male young Emiratis. In terms of age group, the highest percentage of participants (46%) belonged to the age group (20-22 years), while the lowest (7%) belonged to the age

group (25 years and above). Regarding education level, three quarters of the sample had a university degree whereas only 1% of the sample had a qualification that is less than secondary education.

Table 1 shows the participants ranked Reasons related to the level of family communication highest (M = 3.60), followed by Reasons related to husband's behavior and personality (M = 3.56), Reasons related to marital intimacy (M = 3.53), and Reasons related to family economics (M = 3.50).

Table 1: Means and standard deviations of the study domains (in descending order)

Rank	SD	M	Study domains
1	.970	3.60	Reasons related to the level of family communication
2	1.09	3.56	Reasons related to husband's behavior and personality
3	.986	3.53	Reasons related to marital intimacy
4	1.03	3.50	Reasons related to family economics

Rank	SD	M	Study domains
1	.970	3.60	Reasons related to the level of family communication
2	1.09	3.56	Reasons related to husband's behavior and personality
3	.986	3.53	Reasons related to marital intimacy
4	1.03	3.50	Reasons related to family economics

To identify the reasons related to the husband's behavior and personality, the researcher calculated the frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations of the items in the domain covering the causes related to husband's behavior and personality, presented in Table (2) below.

Table 2: Means and standard deviations of the domain covering the causes related to husband's behavior and personality

Item rank	SD	Mean	Reasons related to husband's behavior and personality	Item number
1	3.8184	1.35035	Making a mockery of the wife and her personality	7
2	3.7911	1.52529	Substance Abuse	4
3	3.7757	1.55566	Violence due to alcohol or drug use	10
4	3.7586	1.27335	Ignorance of one spouse or both of legitimate rights	15
5	3.7476	1.38117	Bullying and unilateral decision-making	9
6	3.7316	1.50881	Alcoholism	3
7	3.708	1.09004	Failure to provide the essential needs of the home	1
8	3.7071	1.38093	Weakness of religiousness	14
9	3.6832	1.30593	Excessive nervousness in discussions with wife	8
10	3.6765	1.47687	Revealing marital life secrets	13
11	3.6727	1.20206	Making up conflicts and problems because of previous conflicts	6
12	3.6312	1.34865	Having a lengthy sulk with wife	11
13	3.5819	1.15241	Non-acceptance of criticism or disagreement	5
14	3.5138	1.14576	Man's excessive jealousy	12
15	3.4118	1.1168	Weak participation in household tasks	2
3.5055	1.00317	Overall mean		

Table (2) shows the means and standard deviations of the reasons related to husband's behavior and personality. Means ranged between 3.41 and 3.81 with an overall mean of 3.50. The item "making a mockery of the wife and her personality" came top while the item "weak participation in household tasks" came last (ranked fifteenth).

Table 3: One-sample *t*-test of the means of the reasons related to husband's behavior and personality

Domain	Hypothetical mean	M	SD	T value	Degree of freedom	sig. value
Reasons related to husband's behavior and personality	3	3.5652	1.09527	15.054	850	*.000

It can be seen from Table (3) that the majority of respondents agreed that divorce can be triggered by reasons related to the husband's behavior and personality (M = 3.56, SD = 1.09); [(T= (850) = 15.054, P = .000)]. This indicates that there is an overall agreement that the most important reasons for divorce may be due to matters related to the behavior of the husband especially making a mockery of the wife and her personality.

To identify the reasons related to the level of family communication, the frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations of the items in the domain covering the causes related to the level of family communication were calculated, given in Table (4).

Table 4: Means and standard deviations of the reasons related to the level of family communication

Item rank	SD	Mean	Reasons related to the level of family communication	Item number
1	1.29843	3.8840	Unwarranted parental interference in couple's private life	7
2	1.34646	3.8539	Suspicious and mutual accusations between the spouses	15
3	1.25982	3.8126	Neglect and negligence by one spouse	13
4	1.18072	3.7536	Addiction to social media	5
5	1.26725	3.7410	Husband's staying up late outside the house	4
6	1.17040	3.7095	Continuing problems with the couples' families due to living with them	8
7	1.24238	3.7062	Non-respect for the family of the wife/husband and failing to carry out their social duties	3
8	1.30943	3.6935	Husband's use of criticism and ridicule with his family	10
9	1.21707	3.6841	Weak expression of feelings towards partner due to absence of love	12
10	1.26411	3.6611	Expression of remorse for poor choice by one of the spouses	14
11	1.39898	3.6572	Husband's threatening his wife with the desire for polygamy	11
12	1.09080	3.6172	Weak participation of one of the spouses in family outings to entertain and enjoy	2
13	1.04224	3.4769	Husband's too much travel	1
14	1.35736	3.4327	Servants and nannies' intervention in family affairs	9
15	1.07221	3.2356	Spread of translated and dubbed serials on satellite channels	6
.97005	3.6019	Overall mean		

Table (4) shows the means and standard deviations of the reasons related to the level of family communication. Means ranged between 3.23 and 3.88 with an overall mean of 3.60. The item "Unwarranted parental interference in couple's private life" took the lead while the item "Spread of translated and dubbed serials on satellite channels" ranked bottom (fifteenth).

Table 5: One-sample *t*-test of the means of the reasons related to the level of family communication

sig. value	Degree of freedom	T value	SD	M	Hypothetical mean	Domain
*.000	849	18.090	.97005	3.6019	3	Reasons related to the level of family communication

It can be seen from Table (5) that the majority of respondents agreed that divorce could be triggered by reasons related to the level of family communication (M = 3.60, SD = .97); [(T= (849) = 18.090, P = .000)]. This means that the participants agree that there is a high probability between

divorce and the level of family communication, especially the unwarranted parental interference in the couple's private life.

To identify the reasons related to the level of marital intimacy, the frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations of the items in the domain covering the causes related to the level of marital intimacy were calculated, given in Table (6).

Table 6: Means and standard deviations of the reasons related to marital intimacy

Item rank	SD	M	Reason related to marital intimacy	Item number
1	1.31064	3.8625	Couple's desertion of each other inside the house	7
2	1.42652	3.8465	Having outside relationships (infidelity)	12
3	1.25060	3.7964	Carelessness in appearance and personal hygiene	1
4	1.32514	3.7768	Injustice in marital relationship due to polygamy	6
5	1.28325	3.7584	Paucity of intimacy between the spouses	14
6	1.32167	3.7157	Aversion to the husband/wife	10
7	1.18750	3.6771	Emotional silence between spouses	9
8	1.27281	3.6639	Weakness in the couples' knowledge about sex	11
9	1.23214	3.5988	Monotony of marital life	8
10	1.13498	3.5309	Objection to having children by one of the spouses	3
11	1.25915	3.5249	Bed abandonment by one partner in case of conflict	13
12	1.20348	3.5012	Impotence due to illness	15
13	1.22279	3.2874	Obesity and excessive weight gain	2
14	1.09357	3.2618	Exposure to health problems related to childbearing	4
15	1.17453	3.1983	Lack of husband's adaptation with the stages of wife's pregnancy and giving birth	5
.98691	3.5394	Overall mean		

Table (6) shows the means and standard deviations of the reasons related to marital intimacy. Means ranged between 3.19 and 3.86 with an overall mean of 3.53. The item "Couple's desertion of each other inside the house" came top while the item "Lack of husband's adaptation with the stages of wife's pregnancy and giving birth" came last (ranked fifteenth).

Table 7: One-sample *t*-test of the means of the reasons related to marital intimacy

sig. value	Degree of freedom	T value	SD	M	Hypothetical mean	Domain
.000*	841	15.858	.98691	3.5394	3	Reasons related to marital intimacy

From Table (7) we can see that there is general agreement among the respondents that divorce can be invoked by reasons related to marital intimacy ($M = 3.53$, $SD = .98$); [$T = (841) = 15.85$, $P = .000$]. This means that the respondents agree that marital intimacy is a very important cause of divorce, in particular when couples desert each other inside the house.

Table 8: Means and standard deviations of the reasons related to family economics

Item rank	SD	Mean	Reasons related to family economics	Item number
1	1.39854	3.7557	The husband's extreme stinginess regarding spending on his family	11
2	1.30074	3.7108	Exaggerated expenditure on weddings, which weakens the family's budget	10
3	1.33794	3.6945	Husband's exploitation of his wife's salary without her consent	3
4	1.38316	3.6488	Spread of consumerism because of the wife's desire to imitate her friends	8
5	1.43596	3.6113	High dowries	6
6	1.25823	3.5925	High cost of living	9
7	1.30693	3.5574	Husband's loss of work	14
8	1.28461	3.5499	Accumulation of debts on husband	4

Item rank	SD	Mean	Reasons related to family economics	Item number
9	1.18723	3.5329	Increase of extended family requirements due to living with parents	12
10	1.17963	3.5246	Expenses related to borrowing from banks and loans	5
11	1.28314	3.5213	Expenditure on travel and vacations, which incurs extra financial burdens on the family	7
12	1.10897	3.5084	Husband's financial inability to pay expenses	2
13	1.28906	3.3856	Wife's permanent desire to renew furniture and household items	15
14	1.06540	3.2975	Poor family income level	1
15	1.27393	3.2593	Wife's absence from home due to work	13
1.00317	3.5055	Overall mean		

Table (8) shows the means and standard deviations of the reasons related to family economics. Means ranged from 3.25 to 3.75 with an overall mean of 3.50. The item "The husband's extreme stinginess regarding spending on his family" came top while the item "Wife's absence from home due to work" came last (ranked fifteenth).

Table 9: One-sample *t*-test of the means of the reasons related to family economics

sig. value	Degree of freedom	T value	SD	M	Hypothetical mean	Domain
.000*	839	14.604	1.00317	3.5055	3	Reasons related to family economics

Table (9) clearly shows that the majority of respondents agreed that divorce could be triggered by reasons related to family economics (M = 3.50, SD = 1.00); [(T= (839) = 14.60, P = .000)]. This means that the participants agree that the most important reasons for divorce are the reasons related to family economics especially if the husband shows extreme stinginess in spending on his family.

The results of the field study, (n= 865 young male and female Emiratis) confirm that:

- *T*-tests, which were conducted to know the differences between the means among the study domains according to the gender variable, showed that there were statistically significant differences in all domains according to the gender variable, with females having higher means than males.
- Scheffe's post-hoc comparisons showed that there were statistically significant differences between the age group 18-20 years and age group 20-22 years, with the age group 20-22 years scoring higher averages in all domains. Also, there were statistically significant differences between the age group 20-22 and the age group 25 years and above, with those aged 20-22 years achieving higher averages in the domain of the reasons related to the husband's behavior and personality. Also, there were statistically significant differences between the age group 18-20 and the age group 22-24 years, with higher averages for the latter age group in the domain of the reasons related to the economics of the family. This indicates that the older the person is, the more knowledgeable of the reasons for divorce he/she is.
- The *t*-tests conducted on the means relating to the variable of educational level shows that there were statistically significant differences in all domains (P = 0.005), except for the reasons related to the husband's behavior and personality. These differences are attributed to university education level. That is, the higher the educational level of the person, the more aware of the reasons for divorce he/she is.

With the exception of the domain covering the causes related to husband's behavior and personality, Scheffé's post-hoc comparisons showed that there were statistically significant differences between the academic qualification 'less than secondary' and the qualification 'diploma' with those with the academic qualification 'diploma' scoring higher averages in the domain of the reasons related to the behavior of the husband and

his personality. That is to say, the higher the educational level, the greater the level of awareness and knowledge of the reasons for divorce.

- There were statistically significant differences between the means of the preferred age of marriage according to the gender variable with higher averages for males, an indication that males prefer marriage at a later age than females.

8. Discussion and Recommendations

In light of the above results, although some of the results of the current study are consistent with some findings of the studies conducted on divorce in the UAE and the Gulf societies, namely the reasons related to the personality of the husband and the economic factors represented by the stinginess of the husband, the current study is unique in that it tries to group the main causes, classify and arrange them into sub-causes on early divorce only, (during the first three years of marriage), as perceived by young people themselves giving a clearer picture about the problem.

Social exchange theory suggests that social change or social stability is a result of individual cost-benefit analysis of relationships (Kreager et al, 2013). Within the context of social exchange theory, differences are seen as inciters of conflict by giving an explicit social expression of disapproval and latent hostility. However, these differences also help to remove the sources of these conflicts as they are a force of distribution and division, which ultimately leads to stability and social cohesion. Also, social change is a dialectical process because any form of organization involves the possibility of creating problems and conflicts that call for some organization. What Blau stresses is that there are inflexible structural elements that are closely connected with acquired interests, established power, organizations and traditional systems that do not allow adjustment and harmonization unless they imposed through social conflict and opposition.

Accordingly, the results of the present study show that marital conflicts and rows can lead to the expression of hostility between the spouses, either due to weak family communication, or the husband's abusive personality, who might abandon the home for long periods or commit adultery, hence early divorce. Blau stresses that the achievement of power in the context of social exchanges is linked to the alternatives available to subjects to achieve independence or those alternatives that are available to those in power to achieve control. These alternatives explicitly represent paths to achieve power in social exchanges and the permanent movement between them creates what can be described as the " power dialectic or the game of power", which describes the association (interest-meaning) where the interests and material needs harmonize with self-considerations, spouse's social status and role expectations. Recall that Blau, from the outset of his analysis, linked power to meaning through the social norms arising in relations which serve here as a guide to the spouse's expectations towards the meanings of justice or injustice, legitimation, approval or disapproval, deprivation, hatred, hostility, resentment, solidarity, and opposition.

Therefore, in line with the results of the current study, a married couple has two options. The first is submission and surrender and coping with the escalated marital relationship by one or both partners and consequently accept the distorted marriage with its problems and disadvantages. The second option is independence, hence divorce, which is what the researcher sees as an explanation for early divorce. The desire of spouses for independence and freedom of the commitments of married life (because of one or more of the reasons mentioned above, i.e. weak family communication, husband's personality, intimacy or family economics) pushes one or both spouses to end the relationship, hence early divorce. However, even in cases when the couple continues their married life before they get divorced, they might have marital interactions as the subjugated partner (whether husband or wife) would try to assess the existing benefits of the marriage and weigh them against the downsides of continuing the married life.

Therefore, divorce results from the inability to satisfy the marital, social, psychological and economic needs. Marital satisfaction for human needs is a matter that requires agreement between the

spouses and mutual dependence. Otherwise, a dysfunction may occur as functionalists indicate that not all parts of society always contribute to its stability. One or both spouses may contribute to undermining family structure. Therefore, high divorce rates should be an indicator of a dysfunction in family structure and socialization, or another dysfunction in the value system (act motivators), as indicated by Talcott Parsons, Brett Merton and colleagues (Richard, 2002).

Nonetheless, decisions taken by spouses are ultimately part of the process of social exchange, which is part of the process of integration and social solidarity, and represent an exchange of benefits, which could be tangible or intangible such as feelings of recognition or approval, as determined by society. Note that the society norms are usually in favor of the husband whose wife is seen as his subordinate.

Like marriage, divorce sometimes achieves benefits. The social exchange theory holds that divorce offers solutions to many couples. Just as it harms one of the spouses, children or society, it also provides benefits to each of the parties at stake. Based on the theory of social exchange, it can be said that the exchange of benefits and interests persists even in the worst of circumstances, even in the case of divorce. Thus the management of the post- divorce relationship between the divorcees becomes more feasible especially when children are involved.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are put forward to improve the quality of marital life, which would result in fewer divorces.

- Forming an integrated national strategy targeting all sectors in order to lessen the consequences of early divorce in the Emirate of Sharjah This strategy would be enlightened by the results of this study, the working papers and communications with relevant institutions working on family and divorce.
- Enhancing the role of media campaigns organized by the Marriage Fund to raise society members' awareness of the seriousness of divorce and to prepare the society to accept the children of the divorced and their families, and treat them as a natural part of society.
- Instructing parents to consult the appropriate offices (Family Rehabilitation Offices/ Hotline Service) to seek advice and counseling before the divorce occurs.
- Teaching multiple topics on family, marriage and disadvantages of divorce in schools
- Offering young people who are about to get married training on life and social skills needed for an effective, happy married life.
- Increasing the benefits of training programs for young people who are planning to marry and new couples of both sexes to increase their awareness of the successful techniques to deal with spouse bearing in mind that there should be a renewal in the programs and their providers.
- Enhancing the role of the media by directing various drama serials and programs to present the concept of marriage realistically in terms of the problems facing the family and how to deal with them.
- Seeking out help and counseling from social and family specialists rather than from relatives and friends only, to resolve spouses' problems.
- Advising university managements in the country to offer the course "Family and Marriage Counseling" at university level
- Providing students with information on dialogue ethics by allocating special courses, given the importance of dialogue in improving the level of successful communication with individuals.

References

- [1] Abdul Jalil, Z and Al-Sibai, H. (2006). Factors Affecting the Rise of Divorce Rates among Saudi Families Analytical Study among a Sample of Divorced Women in Jeddah - The Phenomenon of Divorce in the Saudi Society at the University Studies Center for Girls.

- [2] Abdeen, A. (2007) Causes and Psychological and social effects of divorce, Master thesis, Sultan Qaboos University. MA Thesis
- [3] Al Abbar, M. (2004) Divorce: An empirical study on the UAE society. Juvenile Welfare Association, Dubai, UAE:
- [4] Al-Faisal, A. (1991) Some characteristics of social divorced persons in a divorce court in Saudi Arabia, King Saud University, *Journal of Arts* 3, p. (189).
- [5] Al Gharaibeh, F. (2016) Debating the role of custom, religion and law in 'honour' crimes: implications for social work, *ethics and social welfare* 10(2):122-139.
- [6] Al Gharaibeh, F. (2015a) "An Exploration of the Evolution of Women's Roles in Societies of the Gulf Cooperation Council Perspectives in UAE." *Social Development Issues* 37 (3):22-44.
- [7] Al Gharaibeh, F. (2015b) "The Effects of Divorce on Children: Mothers' Perspectives in UAE." *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage* 56(5):347-368.
- [8] Al Gharaibeh, F and Bromfield, N. (2012) an Analysis of Divorce Cases in the United Arab Emirates: A Rising Trend, the *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, 01/2012; 53(6):436-452 Taylor and Francis, USA.
- [9] Al Gharaibeh, F and Olimat, H. (2013) Psychological and Social Effects of Divorce on Children: A Sample of Jordanian Children, *UOS Journal for Humanities and Social Sciences*, UAE 2(9).
- [10] Al Gharaibeh, F. (2014) Reasons for Divorce from the point of view of female citizens: field study, University of Sharjah- UAE.
- [11] Al-Khatib, S. (1993) Divorce and its causes from the perspective of the Saudi man's fist, *King Saud Journal*, Volume 5, Arts, pp. 240-241.
- [12] Al-Malki, A. (2001) The phenomenon of divorce in the United Arab Emirates Causes and trends, risks and solutions: a field study, the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research Number: 50 - Abu Dhabi, UAE.
- [13] Al Nufaijai, M. (2006) Problems arising from the marriage of the Saudi citizen and his impact on the security base, Naif University for Security Sciences, Saudi Arabia, Master Thesis.
- [14] Al-Zerad, F and Yasin, A. (1987) Diagnostic study of the phenomenon of divorce in the United Arab Emirates: (a study of psychological education field) Dubai - Dar Al-Qalam.
- [15] Beavers and Voellers (1983) Family modules comparing and contrasting the Olsen Circumplex module with the Beavers system modules, *family process* 21, pp 250-260.
- [16] Blau, P (1964) Exchange and power in social life, New York, John Wiley.
- [17] Chase Lansdale, P. and Hetherington, E. (1990). The impact of divorce on lifespan Development: Short and long term effects. In D. Featherman & R. M. Lerner (eds.), *Life span development and behavior* (Vol. 10, pp. 105-150). Orlando.
- [18] Divorce Rates Around the World (2012) Available online at:
- [19] <https://graphs.net/divorce-rates.html> (accessed 14 January 2018).
- [20] Feldman, Kerry D. (1994) "Socioeconomic structures and mate selection among urban populations in developing regions." *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*: 329-343.
- [21] Franiuk, R., Cohen, D., and Pomerantz, E. (2002). Implicit theories of relationships: Implications for relationship satisfaction and longevity. *Personal Relationships*. (9): 345-367.
- [22] Harold J. Morowitz, "Hiding in the Hammond Report," *Hospital Practice* (August 1975), p. 39.
- [23] James S. Goodwin, William C. Hunt, Charles R. Key and Jonathan M. Sarmet, (1987) "The Effect of Marital Status on Stage, Treatment, and Survival of Cancer Patients," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 258: 3125-3130.
- [24] Kreager, D, Felson, R, Warner, C, Wenger, M, (2013) Women's education, marital violence, and divorce: a social exchange perspective, *Journal of Marriage and Family* 75 (3), 565-81.
- [25] Mooney, Linda; Knox, David & Caroline Schacht. (2000) *Understanding Social Problems*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

- [26] Morsi, K.(1991). *Marital Relationships and Health of Psychiatry in Islam and Psychology*, Kuwait University, Faculty of Education.
- [27] Naim, S. (1986) *Theory in Sociology*, Cairo: Dar Al Ma'arif.
- [28] National Statistics Center - Abu Dhabi (2013) - United Arab Emirates.
- [29] Othman, Ibrahim and Odeh, M. (1989). *Contemporary Theory in Sociology*, Kuwait.
- [30] Olson, David H., Candyce S. Russell, & Douglas H. Sprenkle (eds.). 1989. *Circumplexmodel: Systemic assessment and treatment of families*. New York: Haworth Press.
- [31] Rashid et al.'s (1998) *Divorce in the UAE community, its causes and social effects*, Dubai, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, UAE.
- [32] Robert Coombs, "Marital Status and Personal Well-Being: A Literature Review," *Family Relations* 40 (1991):97-102; I. M.
- [33] Shalabi, Th. (1990) *Divorce and social change in the Saudi society: A field study on the city of Jeddah*. Jeddah: Scientific Academy House.
- [34] The Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority's (2015) report Available online at: <http://fcsa.gov.ae/en-us/Pages/home.aspx> accessed 14 January 2018).
- [35] The Family Development Centers in Sharjah (2008) *Divorce Facts and Facts, Analytical Study of the Divorce of Citizens and Citizens in the Emirate of Sharjah*, Family Development Centers, Supreme Council for Family Affairs.
- [36] Zaslow, M. (1988). Sex differences in children's response to parental divorce: Research methodology and post-divorce forms. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 58, 355-378.
- [37] Zastrow, Charles (2009). *Introduction to Social Work and Social Welfare: Empowering People*.