



**ST.MARY'S UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK**

**EFFECT OF DIVORCE AND THE PSYCHO-SOCIAL WELL-  
BEING OF CHILDREN IN ADDIS ABABA CITY  
ADMINISTRATION: THE CASE OF YEKA SUB-CITY**

By

**BayushGidisa**

**Jun, 2023  
Addis Ababa,  
Ethiopia**



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**BayushGidisa**

**Advisor: Dr. Baharu G/Yesus**

**A Thesis submitted to Social Work Department, School of Graduate  
Studies, St.Mary's University, for the partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Social Work**

**Jun, 2023  
Addis Ababa,  
Ethiopia**

## **Declaration**

I, Bayush Gidisa, declare that this thesis is my own original work entitled “**Effect Of Divorce And The Psycho-Social Well-Being of Children in Addis Ababa City Administration: The Case Of Yeka Sub-City**” for the partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Social Work in School of Graduate Studies, St.Mary’s University.

**Declared by:**

Name: -----

Sign: -----

Date: -----

## CERTIFICATION

I, the undersigned certify that I have read and here by recommend for acceptance by the Saint Mary's University the thesis prepared by Bayush Gidisa, entitled: *“Effect of Divorce and the Psycho-social Well-Being of Children”* and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Master of Arts Degree in Social Work complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standard with respect to originality.

**Advisor**

Name: -----

Sign: -----

Date: -----

## **Approval Sheet for Board of Examiners**

We, the undersigned certify that we have read and hereby recommend for acceptance by the St. Mary's University the thesis prepared by Bayush Gidisa, entitled: *Effect of Divorce and the Psycho-social Well-Being of Children*” and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Master of Arts Degree in Social Work complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standard with respect to originality.

### **Signed by the examining committee Examiners**

Internal Examiner \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

External Examiner \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Advisor \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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## **List of Acronyms**

<b>KII</b>	Key informant interview
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>RFC</b>	Revised Family Code
<b>SNNP</b>	Southern Nation Nationality People
<b>USA</b>	United State of America
<b>ECC</b>	Education and Child Communities
<b>GNP</b>	Gross National Product
<b>IDI</b>	In-depth interview

## Abstract

*Divorce is the dissolution of a marriage by judgment of a court or by accepted custom. It can also be called a total separation. It is a serious experience that affects the whole family system through its effect particularly children are the sole victim of it. Thus, the main objective of the study was to assess the effect of divorce on children's psychological and social well-being, in Yeka sub city, Addis Ababa. To attain the objective, this study employed exploratory research design and qualitative research approach. Both primary and secondary data sources were used and the primary data about the children's psychosocial wellbeing and parent-child relationship in a broken family were gathered through IDI and KII from 21 custodial parents and 5 key informants who have been selected purposively and snowballing. The gathered data were reviewed, cleaned, categorized and finally analyzed thematically based on the specific objectives of the study. The study findings revealed that parental divorce came to be associated with children's social disposition, social stigma, living arrangement, relocation and low income are greatly influencing both parent and a child's social wellbeing. Pertaining to parental divorce influencing the children's psychological state; sadness, grief, lack of confidence, depression, anxiety, stubborn, attention seeking, lack of motivation are significant psychological disadvantage of children. Finally, the study found out that in post-divorce situations, parents were usually occupied with responding to stressful events that made them lose their sensitivity, care and affection to their children which resulting emotionally alienation of child from parents. Parental divorce is negatively influencing child's relationship with both parents. It is recommended that parents should set up a routine to spend time with their children and understand their feelings and challenges that they encounter. Government organization such as Family courts, justice office, women's and social affairs institutions should also work together to ensure whether all divorced couples should take their parenting responsibility and respect children's right.*

**Keywords:** Effect, divorce, children, Psychological, social, wellbeing

# CHAPTR ONE

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with introductory parts of the study, which includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, research questions, significance of the study, scope and limitation of the study and finally organization of the study.

### 1.1. Background of the Study

According to Brotherson and Duncan (2004), divorce is the oldest social problem in human history. It is usually found along with the basic social institution called marriage. Further, Brotherson and Duncan described that marriage is a reference point for divorce. Divorce is directly related with the institution of marriage because it is the dissolution of marriage ties. Marriage is, thus, the only best reference for the analysis of divorce as a social problem. It is the impact of the dissolution of marital ties of spouses that always triggers people to seriously complain against the issue as a burning question of a society. That is why almost all governments in the world exert efforts in strengthening the stability of marital bonds through a variety of approaches. The societal trends in relation with family formation, marriage, and divorce often shape the interests of people in treating marriage to be stable as one of the social institutions.

It is essential to outline the notion of family, prior to the effect of divorce, because divorce is the result of a dismantlement of family structure. According to the sociologists, family is regarded as a major social institution and a back bone of much of a person's social activity. Similarly, Tami M. (2016) refers children's well-being as substantial part of this institution's responsibility in the society. Therefore, the well-functioning of the family institution is considered to be essential for the well development of the child toward productive member of the community. However, over time the tie of family members have been loosening and increasingly facing a threat of family disharmony called divorce because the traditional role played by the family in society has changed

drastically in the recent past due to globalization along with the number of interrelated factors.

Divorce has its own impact on the lives of children. A child's perception of divorce will be largely determined by age and gender, as well as the child's history of stress and coping (Wayne M., 2011). When stressful events outweigh available protective factors, even the most resilient child can develop problems. A growing body of information suggests that certain factors may make some children more at risk for maladjustment than other children. Some are unalterable and some existed before divorce. Others exert considerable pressure on children at the time of separation or divorce, and still others influence the children following divorce (Wayne M., 2011). Most divorcing parents are very concerned about their children's reactions to their separation and divorce (DeBord, 1997). They want to know whether their children will grow to be healthy and happy or not. Research shows that the effects of divorce depend on the age of the child at the time of divorce. It can also depend on the child's gender and personality, the amount of conflict between parents and the support provided by friends and family (DeBord, 1997).

Marriage and divorce in Ethiopia have a long history. Throughout this history, the marriage institution in the country has been challenged by the prevalence of higher divorce rates (Abebe T., 2008). However, the impacts and the severity of divorce have different trends across different time in the country. In the contemporary Ethiopian society, the rate of divorce is by far higher than any previous time. According to some research conducted, Ethiopia is among the countries having the highest divorce rate in the world (Abebe T., 2008). Tilson and Larson (2001) reported that 45 per cent of first marriage in Ethiopia ends in divorce within 30 years, and two-third of women and men who divorce do so within the first five years of their marriage.

The improved family code of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia states that if divorce has adverse effect on the wellbeing of children, the court has the mandate to see the cases in favor of children (Family code, 2000(80)(3). However, during the implementation procedure the voices of children are not heard.

The primary effect of divorce is the breakdown of the family's ability to provide the fundamental social and psychological needs of its members. The issue of divorce requires

top priority treatment if families are to remain social units and good family relationships are to be maintained. Therefore, it is appropriate to investigate the effect of divorce and the psycho-social wellbeing of children in the Yeka Sub-City of the Addis Ababa City Administration.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

Divorce affects the state or condition of being well; a condition characterized by loss of happiness of children of divorced parents, it affects their health or prosperity: moral or physical welfare and affects an achievable degree of economic wellbeing. Parents are responsible for the economic, social, psychological and physical wellbeing of their child/children. Some psychological impacts are stress that can lead to anxiety, depression, substance abuse, mood swing. Sometimes, the children even make suicide attempts. Children from divorced family are socially isolated, they have poor peer relationship, and they are less sociable they have fewer close friends, spend less time with friends. And economically children from disrupted family might not get enough, health services, getting educational materials, books toys and other resources they need (Webster's international 3rd edition dictionary).

Most of the time, divorce has detrimental effects on both the society and the families of the divorcées. The impacts of divorce, according to Fagan & Churchill (2012), include irreparable harm to all parties involved but crucial to the children. Children frequently experience issues even before their parents split, beginning with the bitter divorce procedure and parental discord (Wallerstein, 2012). Children who receive less attention also get less financial support, emotional support, and practical aid for academic support and encouragement. They may stop encouraging sociability, which would lower the kids' self-esteem, love, and social maturity.

According to Markham (2013), the impacts of divorce on children appear to be transient and eventually dissipate; it takes time for them to adjust to their new living arrangement. Children of divorced parents suffer in several ways. These children are more likely to be less educated, experience poverty or socioeconomic disadvantage, and exhibit antisocial behavior. He asserted that divorce has both immediate and long-term repercussions. If the children of divorced parents are too young to completely comprehend the situation, they

may feel guilty or responsible for the divorce. They become more hostile, belligerent, uncooperative, and emotionally dependent in the short term. Also possible are other behavioral issues including drug and/or alcohol addictions, early marriage or cohabitation, which greatly increases the risk of separation or divorce.

The relationship between divorce and children's psycho-social wellbeing is a growing phenomenon for researchers and policy adjustment. Children from separated homes more likely disposed to negative psycho-social attitudes than children from parents living together (Dare Onifade 2017). Divorce is associated with heart-rending emotions, unspeakable sadness, depression, anxiety, and much more. Moreover, it associated with post-divorce lower trust and communication and higher alienation in parent-child relationships (Klara and Eceiza, 2021). The attachment perspective upholds the notion of parent-child relationships and the responsibilities of families toward children's wellbeing. However, after the divorce, thus families will face economic, social and emotional problems that hinder their attachment with the child and put them in no position to handle their responsibility. For example, (Aster, 2015), argued that following divorce, parent-child relationship becomes lower, and then through time the social competencies of those children become lower. Therefore, positive communication between parents and children are essential factors for children's well-being (Pannilage, 2017).

Divorce may have lasting impacts on them, and it may even occur in the future. Wallerstein (2012) concurred that some kids are less resilient than others and may be badly impacted by the divorce in the future. As a result, the consequences persist into adulthood; they have significantly less faith in their women and have a propensity for less selfless love for their spouses. Amato (2005) found that divorce had a detrimental impact on schooling, with children of divorced parents performing worse in school than those from intact households. This further clarified the Wallerstein (2012) study's findings that divorce has an impact on the grade level that children reach: divorce causes a 33 percent rise in the proportion of girls who drop out of high school. In comparison to children from other family configurations, children who live with two biological parents finish more years of education and earn more money (Wallerstein, 2012). Because divorced

parents are less likely to provide financial assistance, divorce also lowers the probability that a child will complete their college degree.

At the regional or national level, there is no statistical data that can demonstrate the trend in the real divorce rate. However, Tilson and Larsen (2000) also concurred with the notion that "two-thirds of women who divorce within the first 5 years of marriage" and that "forty-five percent of first marriages in Ethiopia end in divorce within 30 years." According to the same survey, divorce is a frequent and well accepted practice in Ethiopia. More than 100,000 street children live in Addis Ababa, the nation's capital (Indrias G., 2006).

Serkalem (2006) made similar study on the impact of divorce on women and children but she did not address the issues of contextual care and custody and she also overlooked the social and psychological wellbeing of children after divorce. Moreover, Zenaye (2008) addressed the principle of the best interest of the child. She argued that custody decision should precede the decision of the divorce itself and emphasized that children have to have a say in matters affecting their lives and the battle over legal custodies is instrumental that is to save the child support money. To this end, the focus of this study is on how divorce affects children. Therefore, this study examined the effect of divorce and the psycho-social well-being of children in Addis Ababa City Administration, Yeka Sub-City.

### **1.3. Research Questions**

1. What are the effects of parental divorce on children's social wellbeing?
2. What are the psychological dysfunctions of children of divorced parent?
3. What are the effects of parental divorce on child-parents intimacy?

### **1.4. Objective of the Study**

#### **1.4.1. Major Objective**

The main objective of the study was to assess the effect of divorce on children's psychological and social well-being, in Yeka sub city, Addis Ababa.



#### **1.4.2. Specific Objectives:**

To attain the general objective, the following specific objectives were taken into consideration:-

1. To identify the effect of parental divorce on children's social life in Yeka sub city.
2. To assess psychological dysfunction that parental divorce brought on children in Yeka sub city.
3. To assess post-divorce parent-child intimacy in divorced family in Yeka sub city.

#### **1.5. Significance of the study**

The significance of this study rests, first and foremost, on its attempt to contribute to a deeper and fuller understanding of the psycho-social conditions of children of divorced parents. Second, it would possibly contribute to the growing body of knowledge geared towards the planning and provision of effective intervention services to improve the living conditions of couples and of children. Third, the study may also serve as a starting point to get other researchers thinking about doing further inquiry about the issue under study. As a result, the findings may be used as information to decrease divorce and keep marriages intact among couples in the city by strengthening both the woman and the husband's dedication to fostering trust and understanding. It can also be helpful for governmental policy makers and civil association program developers to develop intervention and prevention programs to offer professional family counseling services.

#### **1.6. Scope of the study**

To make the study being manageable, it is necessary to define the delimitation of the study. The study was delimited geographically, thematically, and methodologically. Thus, geographically, the study is solely limited to purposively selected two weredas (weredas 8 and 9) of Yeka's sub-city, Addis Ababa City Administration. Thematically, the purpose of this study was to assess the social and psychological effects of divorce on children of divorced parents. Methodologically, this study focused on cross-sectional exploratory descriptive research design using qualitative research approach, purposive sampling technique and thematic and narrative data analysis methods.

### **1.7. Limitation of the Study**

It was challenging to acquire the intended total population to utilize an actual sample size from that population inside the targeted sites as each divorce case is not tracked at the sub-city level. The parents were not be pleased, and it was challenging to obtain their consent to interview their kids. Therefore, obtaining the parents' consent took some time. However, respondent parents were approached with ethical manner, and by explaining about the benefit that this study would have for divorced family in influencing policy maker, confidentiality of their information, the anonymousness of their information and by giving them a preference of being recorded or let the researcher to take note during interview, to get their consent.

### **1.8. Operational Definition of Terms**

Unless specified, the terms used in this study has the following working meaning and should be understood within the given context below;

**Child:** United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child (1990), defines a 'child' as a person below the age of 18, unless the laws of a particular country set the legal age for adulthood younger. For the purpose of this a child is the daughter or son of a divorced parent whose age was between 7-13 years old.

**Divorce:** Divorce is any formal separation of husband and wife according to established custom (Dictionary.com, 2016). In other words, in this study, it could be understood as a termination of an individual, husband or wife, relationship or marriage through formal customs or court proceedings.

**Custodial parent:** Travis Peeler (2020), is the person who has assumed the main responsibilities associated with caring for their child. In this study, it is a primary parent who has arole of physical custody and shares a home and resides with the child for a majority of the time. Here in this study it refers one of the parent, who took the responsibility of rising and taking care of a child, after marital divorce

**Effect:** *Wordweb dictionary*, defines Effect as a phenomenon that follows and is caused by some previous phenomena. This study defined effect as any negative consequences of

divorce that a child had faced or influenced by because of the divorce of his/her parents and the circumstance that come to exist following parental divorce.

**Social Well-being:** Jenna Sinclair (2021), Social well-being can be defined as the state of sharing, developing, and sustaining meaningful relationships with others. In this study, it refers to the child's healthy interaction with the ways of human life, which has the meaning of having a good state of harmony with those who are around us and in our environment.

**Psychological Well-being:** Psychological well-being refers to inter-and intra-individual levels of positive functioning that can include self-referent attitudes that include one's sense of mastery and personal growth, Arne Holt, (2016). In this study, it reflects a child's well individual thoughts, emotions, behaviors, memories, perceptions, and understanding state. It generally about how a child feels positive about self and life, the ability to learn, react and cope well with stress and manage emotional intelligence on a day-to-day basis in the post-divorce situation.

## **1.9. Organization of the Paper**

This paper was organized into five chapters. The first chapter is the introduction, which contains the background of the study, problem statement, and significance of the study, scope and limitation of the study. The second chapter is a review of the literature that includes the theoretical and empirical literature studies conducted by any person and scholars in the area. The third chapter is methodology of the study including data collection methods, sampling design and techniques and data analysis. The fourth chapter presented results and discussion of the study. Finally, the fifth chapter provides the summary of major findings, conclusions and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

This chapter presented a review of related literature on the effect of parental divorce on the social and psychological well-being of children and the post-divorce child-parent relationship. The first part of this section tried to create a theoretical base for the understanding of the issues under study. To make more sense of these theories each theoretical suggestion and explanation were coupled by empirical findings. The second part dealt with the related empirical evidence on the negative effect of divorce on children's psycho-social well-being and parent-child intimacy, followed by a research gap, summary and conceptual framework.

#### **2.1. Theoretical Framework**

According to Jude Cassidy & Phillip R. Shaver (2016) explains, divorce weakens family ties, between the children and the parents. And divorce emanates from unhealthy interaction of family members and consequently results in a dysfunction of family structure and Victimization of children in a family. Since the central idea of the Family system and Attachment theories revolve around the attachment and interdependency in the family, the structural functioning of a family and the parental role in shaping the children, these theories are believed to be relevant to creating an understanding of the process of divorce and its effect on those interdependent family members. Thus, if parents keep having conflicts in their homes, children are bound to be affected as they grow up (VanderValk et al., 2005). Therefore, the two common theoretical threads are apparent in the literature regarding child development in divorced families: Attachment theory & Family system theory

##### **2.1.1 Attachment Theory**

Attachment theory has been described as the dominant approach to understanding early social development. Bowlby (1907-1990) is regarded as an important theorist and is famous for his pioneering work in attachment theory. The most important tenet of attachment theory is that, an infant needs to develop a relationship with at least one primary caregiver for their successful social and emotional development. Because the

dimension of the child-parent relationship, involves protection and security regulation. Therefore, within this theoretic framework, attachment conceptualized as an intense and enduring affection bond that the infant develops with the mother figure, a bond that is biologically rooted in the function of protection from danger (Mooney, 2010).

The attachment developed first in infancy as the adult caregiver responds consistently and sensitively to the infant's needs and social overtures (Lowenstein, 2010). Goldsmith (2010) described this attachment behavior as an emotional dance, because neither partner is passive in the development of the bond. While the mother is generally accepted as the primary caregiver of the infant, attachment theory does not limit an infant's attachment to just the mother (Candel & Turliuc, 2019; Diamond, 2018). Attachment theory is considered one of the leading theories used to understand the individual's personality and relationships. In essence, Bowlby's (1973, 1979, and 1982) concept of attachment was an attempt to understand the formation of social relationships and personality.

The principles of attachment theory often affect groups, because members' attachment styles affect the ways that they relate to the rest of the group. (Markin & Marmarosh, 2010), found that anxiously attached individuals who think negatively about themselves also tend to negatively react to group interactions. Similarly, they found that individuals with an avoidant attachment style tend to distance themselves from the group and instead prefer to rely on only themselves to achieve goals. However, cohesive groups "will give anxious members a sense of security and mitigate attachment effects". Therefore, it is important that group members understand the attachment, because it can have a significant effect on member contributions and interactions.

Although attachment theory does not specifically delineate the factors that contribute to divorce, it provides an important foundation for understanding the mechanisms underlying this prevalent form of social disruption in adulthood. The theory stipulates two important criteria for healthy human functioning: First, every individual (throughout the lifespan) requires the presence and availability of a trustworthy figure who is willing and able to provide a safe haven, Second, everyone must be able both to recognize when another person is a trustworthy attachment figure and to collaborate with him or her to maintain a mutually rewarding relationship (Bowlby, 1979). From an attachment

perspective, the absence of one or both of these important features of marriage, sets the stage for dysfunctional relations and eventual separation and divorce. Eventually, the insecurities in attachments or dysfunctional relations led to maladaptive behaviors in later adult life

### **2.1.2. Functionality Theory**

Dysfunction happening at any one level of a system (the family, neighborhood, communities, school, or political governance) will inevitably affect other system or be affected by other dysfunctions (Skuse, 2011). Hence, dysfunction at family will extend to other systems requiring intervention that address the dysfunction to be able to ensure the functionality of the systems at other levels. For example, child raised in hostile family environment will continue to be a nuisance at school or in the neighborhood negatively impacting other children functioning. These two perspectives reaffirm the need to focus on families to ensure functionality and healthy interactions since failure in functioning of the latter will inevitably impacts the other systems at different levels (i.e., neighborhood, community, society, government levels).

### **2.1.3. Family Systems Theory**

The Family Systems Theory of Bowen is a theory of human behavior. Wiens (2014) states that Bowen emphasized that families learn behavior that had evolved from generations before them, and this is how they also behave (in other words through modeling and social learning). It views the family as an emotional unit. Family Systems Theory uses systems thinking to describe the complex interactions in the unit. It is the nature of a family that its members are intensely connected emotionally. Importantly, the theory discusses anxiety affecting one's reaction to difficulties and when responding to other people. Often people feel disconnected from their families, but this is related more to feelings that family members have toward each other. Waller (1938) Waller explores the idea that family experiences are repetitive and are based on patterns of interaction. In general, family systems theory has its greatest utility in communication and clinical applications.

Family members strongly affect each other's thoughts, feelings, and actions. It often seems as they are living under the same "emotional skin." Family members seek each other's attention, approval, and support and react to each other's needs, expectations, and distress. The connectedness and reactivity make the functioning of family members interdependent. A change in one person's functioning is predictably followed by common changes in the functioning of others. From this perspective we could understand that the change occurred due to divorce and separation will complicate the chain of interaction and parental role of providing love, care and affection to those dependent and vulnerable children in family. Because it is predicted that children's well-being is linked with the interplay of relationships and emotional harmony, (Pryor & Rodgers, 2001).

Family systems theory brings both theoretical and applied approaches to the understanding of family life, (Fingerman & Bermann, 2000). It combines elements of psychological and sociological perspectives where the family is viewed as a complete organization which functions as rule-governed and self-regulated system (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2011). It develops its certain working principles that help to understand the influence of multiple complex interactions on every aspect of the individual's life within this unit (Carr, 2006).

The family exerts a powerful influence on each family member's feelings and behaviors. It is assumed that families are self-regulating, each part carries out certain functions, and that family roles and functions are established by rules and structures. This pattern of interaction is important and in family structures. It is a major challenge to integrate relationship subsystems into a functioning family. It is predicted that children's well-being is linked with the interplay of relationships and emotional harmony, (Pryor & Rodgers, 2001).

Using the Family Systems approach, the family is seen as an open, on-going, goal seeking, self-regulating social system sharing the features of all these systems. It has become a preferred theoretical framework in the analysis and treatment of dysfunctional families, in this case divorced families. In addition, Bowen believed people were influenced by relationships and were usually totally unaware of this. For example, in most relationships people solicit each other's attention, approval and support and react to

each other's needs, expectations and distress. Bowen saw this connectedness and reactivity between family members as interdependence. For example, harmony is in every action affects all other persons in the family (Daniel Pearce, 2020).

## **2.2. The Effects of Divorce on Children**

Attachment theory offers a particularly comprehensive and complete explanation for why children from divorced families grow up having more problems that affect their life in many ways than children from intact families. In this section, theory that supported with research findings relating the effects of divorce on psychosocial aspect of child and on child's attachment with parent are;

### **Divorce and child Psychological wellbeing**

Indeed, attachment theory suggests that early care giving experiences influence social and psychological development throughout the life span (Bowlby 1969). Children of divorce may experience the effects of separation and loss to an even greater extent than the divorcing adults, because (1) children typically have no control over the decision, and (2) it often seems to them to occur suddenly and without warning. For children, the disruption of important attachment bonds occurs not only with regard to one or both parents, but often with regard to friends and extended family members as well (e.g., Aster, 2015). The cumulative toll of these separations and losses, coupled with other divorce-related stressors (e.g., economic hardship, moving, changing schools, and parental remarriage), may complicate children's psychological development and influence adjustment (Amato, 2000).

Consistent with this research and with attachment- theoretical predictions, Carly Snyder.MD, (2021) proposed that many psychological and health effects of divorce on offspring are mediated through disrupted parenting in general, and specifically through diminished warmth/sensitivity and reduced physical and/or psychological availability of parents. And (Anthony, E. J. 2019), argued inadequate parenting or physical absence of a parent, in turn, causes a particular kind of distress in children—namely, emotional insecurity regarding their parents' love and ability to care for them Gabriella Devi



Benedicta, 2017), also mentioned that the impact of divorce is associated with inadequate care for the children of the divorcee, and the stigma experienced

### **Divorce and child Social wellbeing**

Attachments between family members are the basis for forming relationships and being able to develop into healthy adults. As humans, our first attachment begins at birth with infants relying on their parents for all basic needs. The bond between child and caregiver is the building block for forming future attachments, as it provides a schema with which to understand the world (Ainsworth, 1989); therefore, being conscious of healthy attachment can aid in healthy child social development. Early attachment also influences future romantic relationships and friendships (Bowlby, 1969). It is advantageous and feasible for a child to form multiple attachments with friends, family, teachers, and other significant figures in his or her life, as these people become the child's support system. However, negative family experiences, such as divorce, can affect parents' appraisals, emotions, and behaviors, leading them to be less sensitive to their children's needs which in turn, may have a negative impact on the quality of child social relationships, Lee 2019).

Described as an elegant dance between parent and child, attachment is the name of the system that accounts for the bonding between infant and caregiver (Goldsmith, 2010; Pistole, 2010). The social experiences of the adult serve to reinforce the patterns of behavior and beliefs the individual has developed over the course of their earlier care giving experiences. A positive relationship is found between early positive family interactions and later reflect in romantic and social interactions of children (Candel and Turliuc, 2019).

In fact, some empirical studies have associated parental divorce with less secure parent-child relationships, even in the long term this can hinder child social development, during young adulthood (Amato 2001; Feeney and Monin 2016). Attachment researchers also suggests that those children of divorce, with anxious or avoidant attachment, use more negative types of communication that hinder their romantic relation. Donna, R. M. and Mary, J. C. (2018), argued that, despite hoping to have stable relationships themselves

when they grow up, children who have experienced divorce are more likely to divorce when in their own relationships,

### **The effect of divorce on Parent-child relationship**

Attachment theory suggests that negative family experiences can affect parents' sensitivity to their children's needs and, thus, on the quality of parent-child relationships (Bowlby 1969). Indeed, existing literature confirms that parental divorce is associated with less secure parent-child ties during young adulthood. The children's behavioral, physical, mental, and social adjustment after parental divorce depends on the level and intensity of parental conflict prior, during, and after divorce, TarekegnTafesse, (2015). Not only does divorce present attachment-related challenges for children, but the divorce-related stressors experienced by parents frequently interfere with the parents' ability to respond adequately and consistently to their children's needs, (Aster, 2015). Children of divorce usually have less contact with their parents, exchange less emotional support and help behaviors with them, and describe the relationships with their parents in a more negative way which, in turn, has been associated with lower wellbeing levels in young adulthood, (e.g., Amato and Sobolewski, 2001).

Although young adulthood is characterized by a greater emotional autonomy towards parents, parents are still important figures in the transition to this period, as young adults still depend on their parents as an economic resource, but also for emotional support and advice (Arnett, 2015). Relationships with parents during this developmental period have been defined with positive and negative emotions, such as love, thankfulness, acceptance, disappointment, resentment and mistrust (Arnett, 2015). The quality of parent-child relationships is an important protective factor that predicts the long-term impact of divorce on children. However, according to USA national surveys show a significant deterioration in relationships between children and their parents, especially fathers, over time, (JoAnne, 2020).

### **2.3. Empirical Literature**

The literature that explores the effects of divorce on children's social, psychological wellbeing and attachment quality are presented below.

### **2.3.1. Parental Divorce and Children's Social Well-being**

The notion social aspect of wellbeing refers to the interaction and relationships among the individual, family, peers, and community (UNRWA, 2016). The focus of this study is a children ranged from about seven to thirteen years, which is a transitional period from childhood to adolescence. During these progresses, therefore, in this initial development phase children need to be guided with a view and support of parents that enabling them to develop greater competence and self-confidence in diverse areas and activities within society. according to, Theogo 2016), during this phase, it is common for individuals to struggle with sense of identity, worries about whether one is normal tend to emerge, ascribing social norm and values and face peer group influence.

That said, divorce may undermine the Social value, common habitation and mutual care and companionship that granted by marriage. In our society, where women or mother supposed to take the lion role in raising the child, divorce has caused these women harsh time of playing this roles. According to Mehari Haile (2013), a divorce woman loses her right of property over her husband, take the responsibility of child custody and loses social value in the society which expose them to destabilized emotional state, and where there is no fully performing parent who can build sentimental attachment with a children, the social development of the child more likely to be ineffective. That is, generally, to say, the child's social skill is basically dependent on wellbeing and effort of the parents.

In fact after divorce children may not enjoy warmth care and companionship of their parents, that turn to greatly influence their interaction with friends and society. Losing this significant relationship with parent, changes children's perspective about how their interaction and relationships should be in social. Amato 2012, argued, as those children who have experienced parental divorce experience significant loss of their close relationships such as close family members, friends and other social changes such as having to form new friends as they move school or homes if this comes with the divorce.

Moreover, factors such as socio-cultural pressure and child's ability to adjust in new living arrangement also suggested as influencing who the child should become, socially. For example, Tayech 2018, found out that in divorced family where mother is a house

head, children tend to be bullied and dishonored by society, because the society honors when the child live with father. And this affect how the child relates with others socially by resulting low confidence in interaction with other, Mercy 2017, conducted a major social effects of divorce on children are poor relationships, hostility towards others, being shy, isolation, being introverted and aggression.

### **2.3.2 Parental Divorce and Psychological Wellbeing of Children**

The psychological aspects of development refer to an individual's thoughts, emotions, behaviors, memories, perceptions, and understanding. UNRWA. (2017). A prove from literature is that there are negative psychological effects. Studies like, Zainabu M. 2017 and Bethlehem 2016 concluded that psychological effect of divorce is the massive one. Since the children lives were accustomed with both parents, the idea of not having one parent around them is the beginning of their psychological turmoil, because it is emotionally shocking for them. Adam M, (2010), argued that from the moment that the children become aware of their parental separation, they become involved, at least emotionally, in the process of their parent's divorce,

It is often difficult to separate the countless number of factors that influencing the children's psychological state. Notably, the parent's emotional and physical unavailability of parent, post-divorce living arrangement and socio-economic constrain that divorced family members are encountering were hypothesized as being contributory factors. However, in divorced family children requires a significant adjustment. And in response to that they might experience a wide range of emotional reactions, including sadness, anger, loneliness, depression, insecurity, heightened anxiety, worry, lower life satisfaction, lower self-esteem and self-confidence, fear, yearning, rejection, conflicting loyalties, and a sense of fault for their parents' problems Fagan and Churchill (2012) as cited in Maxine Ward, 2019).

On the other hand, parents may enter into another marriage and may relocated which the child may not wish to be a part. Within this transitional circumstance parenting can become inconsistent and family routines can become disrupted. This can contribute to a child's emotional insecurity with the parent, resulting in a weaker parent-child relationship. Moreover, in many literature, for example such as Bethlehem 2016,

behavioral change such as anger, sadness, disobedient, feeling insecurity and low cognitive ability were demonstrated, by varying degree, among children. This is because children lack brain stimulation from learning by observing through both parents instead they will learn through observing the only one parent whom he or she doesn't have enough time to guide, thought and provide emotional support, Zainabu M. 2017.

Therefore, according to, Tayech 2018. This child does not feel happy and always under distressful conditions of any circumstances. Even if they are in a good situation, complex psychological effects follow them for the rest of their life. That said, in order for children to feel confidence and aspired, children need a close fulfilling relationship with their parents who are committed to constantly supervise and guiding them. Combining work and parenting not only affects the time a single mother has for child care, but it also introduces stress that negatively affects her psychological well-being and parenting effectiveness, Zainabu M. 2017

### **2.3.3. Parental Divorce and Parent-Child Relationship Quality**

Extensive researcher suggested that the primary effect of divorce is a decline in the relationship between parent and child. Because when a couple separates, it is often traumatic for all family members. It is probably true that both parents and children suffer during the divorce process. Parents become so involved in their own problems that it is hard for them to recognize their children's needs. Most parents preoccupied by adjusting with divorce itself and to anew and very different role as divorced parent, Esther B. 2020. Hence, children do react in various ways to what they are witnessing after divorce. For instance, unavailability of parent, as well as the parenting style and the way the parent interact with child are affecting children's reactions to the parents, and leading to reduce the relationship quality (Bethlehem, (2016).

Parents may also not recognize what children are going through as they focused on themselves, they may have less sensitiveness and responsiveness to the child, which consequently will lead to poor parent-child relationship quality. According to Klara Smith, 2021) divorce can affect parents' appraisals, emotions, and behaviors, leading them to be less sensitive to their children's needs which in turn, may have a negative impact on the quality of parent-child relationships. The worst thing is that, for example,

according to, Tayech 2018, parents in many situation display a behaviors such as anger, strict control and avoidance toward their children, from which insecure attachment of child toward parent are more likely to emerge. This child's attachment can be manifested by, Klara Smith, 2021) as lower trust and communication, along with higher alienation, with both parents.

#### **2.4. Research gap**

In reviewed literature, I came to realize that different researchers investigated parental divorce and its consequence, such as, common cause and socio economic cost of divorce by Mehari (2013), coping strategy of children from divorced parent by Nega Gedefew (2021), causes and consequences of divorce among Wolisso town community, Debela Lemessa (2018), impact of divorce on students and their academic achievements by Betelhem (2016), and cause of divorce and its effect on children's wellbeing by Aster Shibeshi (2015). However, considering the weight of the psycho-social aspect of children, the magnitude of the psycho-social impact of divorce on children's development were not exclusively studied nor fully understood in Ethiopia, especially in Yeka sub city.

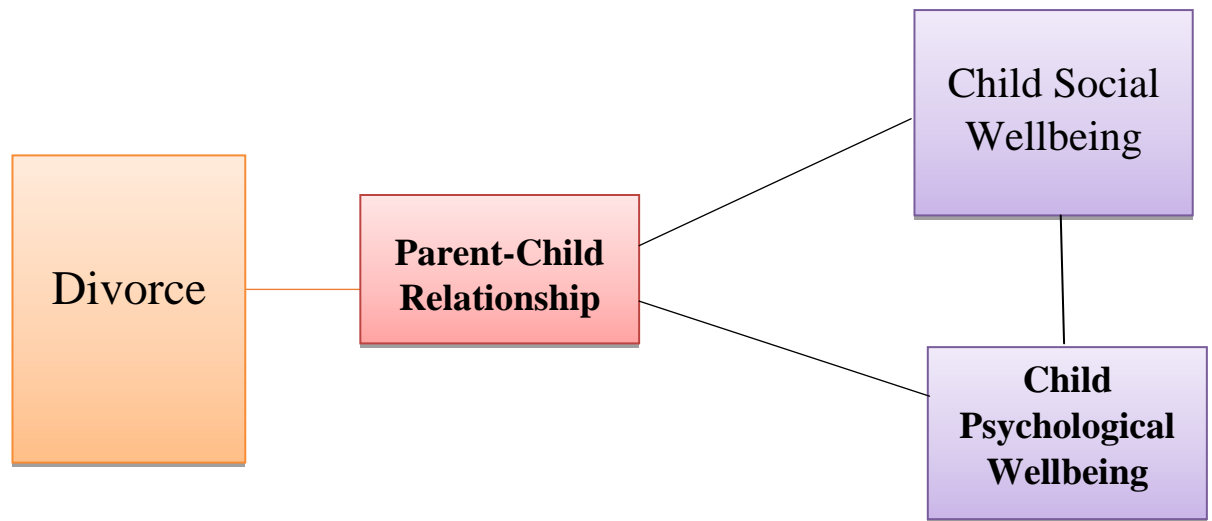
Besides, although, there are some researcher wrote about the effects of divorce on children's wellbeing, none of them deeply looked into post-divorce parent-child relationships as moderate between divorce and children's wellbeing. This study is unique in that it addressed the gaps in the existing literature by adopting Family system and attachment theory to examine the potential mediator, parent-child relationships, that may influence or moderate the psycho-social impact of divorce on children, focusing on post-divorce scenario.

Further, All researchers agree that divorce affects the lives of children, while they seem to disagree on the extent of these effects. Some researchers are of the opinion that the impact on children decreases in intensity over time. According to JoAnne Pedro (2020), while parental divorce poses significant risks for children that warrant concern, the outcomes are not the same for all children, nor are they inevitable. Because there are many factors, that can reduce risks and promote children's resilience (e.g. quality of parenting provided over time, the quality of the parent-child relationship and the quality

of welfare provision for a child of a divorcee. This implies a need for the researcher to capture timely flexibility of this negative phenomena that children are experiencing from divorce. Therefore, this study was carried out to fill the identified knowledge gap by investigating the effects of divorce on psycho-social wellbeing of children, with a particular interest in parent-child intimacy in a divorced family in Yeka sub city, to capture timely flexibility of the phenomenon children are experiencing after parental divorce.

## **2.5. Conceptual Framework**

Conceptual Framework is a visual or written product that explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied the key factors, concepts, or variables and the presumed relationships among them" (Miles & Huberman,1994, cited in Ruth Garside, 2020). Guiding by the above theories, the suggestion is that divorce-related stresses are more likely to might hinder parents' ability to be sensitive, warm and responsive to their children's needs, in this case, insecure attachment or low quality parent-child relationships, resulting with psychosocial dysfunction in child's life. There is proven evidence to suggest that the formation of secure attachment with one or a few selected people as a major achievement in emotional development during the early years was recognized a long time ago, by Bowlby (1982). Family systems also suggests that marital conflict might spill over affecting parent-child relationships negatively which was detrimental to psychosocial state of child.



**Source:** Configured by Researcher from Literature Review, 2023

Figure: Conceptual Framework



## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter illustrated the elements of research methods that the researcher used during conducting the research work. This methods include the research design, the research approach, the target population of the study, the sampling technique and sample size, sources and types of data, data collection methods, data analysis and ethical consideration.

#### 3.1. Description of the Study Area

Addis Ababa was founded in 1886. Addis Ababa, also spelled Addis Ababa, and is often referred to simply Addis, is the capital of Ethiopia and a hub for international affairs concerning Africa. <http://wikimapia.org> (2023) with an estimated population of more than 5,000,000 people spanning over an approximate area of 365km<sup>2</sup> (141 mi<sup>2</sup>), it is the largest and most populous city in the nation. Situated on the foothills of Mount Entoto, in the altitude range between 2,100 to 2,700 m (6,900 to 8,860 feet) above sea level, and near the actual geographical center of the country, the city enjoys a mild, pleasant climate. The annual average temperature in the central part of the capital is 16°C (61°F); that is, 21°C (70°F) during the day and 11°C (52°F) at night. <http://wikimapia.org> (2023)

In 1886, Empress Taytu Betul in collaboration with her husband, Emperor Menelik II moved the capital from the highlands of Entoto to the foothills on the south side of the mountain and settled in what was then a heavily wooded, rural area around the hot springs known as Filwoha. Inspired by the scenery, Empress Taytu coined a name for the new settlement, Addis Ababa, meaning 'New Flower'. Addis has gone through some relatively rapid transformations since it was established just over a century ago, to become one of the major cities in Africa. Addis Ababa is home to the headquarters of the African Union (AU), and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). Consequently, Addis hosts numerous international diplomatic missions, including 95 embassies.

Yeka sub-city is the second largest next to Kolfe-keraniyo among the eleven sub-cities

of Addis Ababa in terms of population size and it takes third rank in terms of area coverage following Bole and Akaki sub-cities, respectively. It encompasses an area of 85.98 Sq.km (<http://www.geohive.com>. (2022). Yeka sub-city has 13 weredas/kebeles. Of those weredas, Wereda 8 & Wereda 9 were selected using simple random sampling technique for the current study.

### **3.2. Research Design**

Cooper and Schindler (2013), explained, research design is the framework that is used for the collection and analysis of data gathered to help meet the objectives of the study. Accordingly, this study employed exploratory descriptive research design which enabled the researcher to assess the new phenomena of targeted groups, or the researcher was relied on the participants' own perspectives to provide insight into their experience. Besides, since the study primarily focused on assessing the children's experience having their perception included in the case study helped the researcher to see consistence of the data among the participants.

### **3.3. Research Approach**

Considering the study topic and the nature of the data required to meet the study objective, the study employed a qualitative research approach. A qualitative approach is an approach that helps to generate rich, detailed data that leave the participant's perspective intact and provides a context for the phenomena being studied (Weinreich, 2009). Therefore, in order to have a better understanding of how children experienced parental divorce, the researcher chosen this approach seeking to go in-depth into understanding of post-divorce experiences of children from the subject's perspective.

### **3.4. Data Types and Sources**

Both primary and secondary data were employed in this study. Primary data was gathered from custodial parents and key informants (official experts who had experiences of working on the issues related to divorce) by approaching them through interview about the children's psycho-social wellbeing and parent-child relationship in a broken family. Secondary data was collected through analyzing books, articles, family code, and other

divorce related documents from court reports, women and social affairs' office to investigate the psycho-social effect of divorce on children in Yeka sub-city.

### **3.5. Sampling Technique and Sample Size**

In selection of study site and target population, purposive and snowball sampling techniques were employed. Among 13 Weredas of Yeka sub-city, Wereda 8 & 9 and target population of a study were selected purposively. The target population was parental divorced children but their situation was explored through their custodial parents who were selected purposively and snowballing based on their experience on divorce. Babbie (2011) described snowball sampling as situations where the researcher asks the participant to point other suitable participants. Kumar (2014) also described purposive sampling as the researcher choosing the sample that is applicable to the study, or have the knowledge of the topic being researched.

Here, the intention was to set the frame for the population of study regarding the post-divorce experience of children. The sample for this study came from the custodial parents who divorced for not more than five years and key informants who had work experience regarding divorced family. Parent respondent included without considering whether they were re-married or not, but have been experienced divorce for 5 years, because the objective of the study was to assess the effect of divorce on the children wellbeing.

In determining the sample size for qualitative data, Creswell (2013) recommended that qualitative sample sizes will always be smaller than quantitative sample sizes. The reason is that for qualitative studies, it is in-depth information from a smaller sample, and quantitative requires meaningful statistics from a large representative sample. Therefore, being qualitative study need small sample size and basing on divorce report of Yeka sub city, 21 divorced custodial participants were interviewed based on principles of data saturation and 5 official experts who had contact with divorced family.

### **3.6. Methods of Data Collection**

The data collection method is a systematic way of gathering data relevant to the purpose of the study. Based on the objectives of this study and nature of data needed, the researcher has adopted qualitative data collection methods. It was collected through in-

depth interview (IDI) and key informant interview (KII). In-depth interview (IDI) was conducted with custodial parents who take the responsibilities of caring those children. In-depth interview (IDI) enables the researcher to collect more data which may not be possible through any other means. This interview provided an opportunity for the researcher to get detail information about the effect of divorce on social and psychological well-being of children. Similarly, KII was conducted with two Federal First Instance Court Yeka 2<sup>nd</sup> family Bench judges, one Women and Social Affairs office, one Association for Women's Sanctuary and Development /AWSAD/ and one Social Work Professional.

**In-depth interview:** According to Surbhi, S, (2018), it is a data collection method wherein a direct, in-depth conversation between interviewer and respondent takes place. The researcher used semi-structured interview schedule, because it gave the interviewer and participant's opportunity to clarify the question and understand each other in the one to one interaction. It's important to refer, Maree (2007), who stated on the fact that semi-structured interviews yield best results when collaborated with other data. Further, it allowed the researcher some probing questions, to obtain further explanation and in-depth information from the participants. Due to, the preference of participant, during interview, the researcher wrote down response on her notebook. The issues of participant's willingness and ethical considerations were assured during an interview. Initially, participants were informed of all the facts about the research before they signed the consent. This was to ensure that they were fully aware of what they were signing up for, so that they can think clearly about all the information that they are going to provided.

**Key Informants Interview:** Key informant interview here was to gather information from a person with a unique professional background, related to the issue under study. With identified Key Informants semi structured interviews were conducted in order to get objective and detailed information about the effect of divorce on psycho-social wellbeing of children. The assumption was that these groups are aware of the issue of divorced families in the study area so that their information can be unbiased data, as they were not expressing their own personal issues, and to consistency of the other respondent's data.

### **3.7. Methods of Data Analysis**

Whittaker (2009) describes data analysis as the process of making sense of the information the researcher collected and searching for what lies deeper. In this study, qualitative data analysis method was utilized in a way it can facilitate the meaningfulness of the findings. For qualitative data analysis, thematic approach that driven by research question and gave a researcher the ability to attach significance to the themes and patterns observed in the gathered data.

During data collection, the interviewer used different means of recording upon the permission of interviewees; take a note to record expressions of participants that cannot be recorded by tape like facial expressions and gestures. In doing so data coding techniques were used to identify the meaning of the concepts within the set of data basing on the subjects perception. The data analysis process began with having a good overview of the data then arranging and translating the data back to English, because it was collected in local language. All interviews were transcribed with the aid of Microsoft Word. Then the data interpreted by developing codes, categories and concepts, followed by analyzing through triangulation of various data sources to increase the validity and reliability of the findings of the study.

The data gathered through various data collection methods such as through in-depth individual interviews and key informant interviews and in other informal ways of talking with some important people on issues related to the divorced family children were reviewed and cleaned. Then, it has been summarized and categorized thematically based on the specific objectives of the study.

#### **3.7.1. Trustworthiness of Qualitative Data**

Cohen et al., (2015) had defined reliability “as a synonym for dependability, consistency and replicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents” (p.199). However, scholars disagree on the usage of the term and the methods used to test it for quantitative and qualitative researches. Scholars like Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested the usage of terms such as ‘dependability’ or ‘trustworthiness’ among others to be used for measuring the reliability of qualitative research.

The researcher approached few among the selected same interview participants in repeated times to obtain additional data and use the opportunity to request the participants to respond to the same questions that they have responded it before. The researcher found that their responses through time was not varying, and this had added value to the reliability of the data.

### **Validity**

According to Winter (2000) cited in Cohen et al., (2015) “in a qualitative data validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the fairness or objectivity of the researcher”. Cohen et al., (2015) argue that trying to impose terms such as generalizability, replicability, etc. from the quantitative research tradition on the qualitative paradigms would be absurd. They cite Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Bogdan and Biklen, 1992 who outline some of the principles of validity in the qualitative paradigm.

The researcher had tried to increase the chance of transferability of the data by using multiple case studies and providing a thick description for readers to deduct any observable transferable aspects from the data. In addition, she used triangulation of data to ensure validity of the data by providing a thick description of the data that was obtained from the interviews including the specific context of information and direct quotes. She also checked for researcher bias and constantly avoid it to present the proper protocol in terms of tone, attitude, clothing that were observed.

Furthermore, the researcher undertook respondent’s validation by showing the recorded data back to the respondents to mitigate a research bias in recording the data. In undertaking the interviews, the researcher made sure that the questions asked were consistent with the conceptual framework applied in the study and reviewed constantly the framework to mitigate diversion from the appropriate questions.

### **3.8. Ethical Consideration**

The information collected from the participants were kept confidential and their name and profile were not mentioned on the research paper. Efforts were made to avoid disturbances and protect the privacy of the study participants and the key informants

while gathering data. In addition, the right of the study participants to withdraw from the study at any time was safeguarded. To avoid intrusive interview for the children (extended case), the researcher established good rapport before conducting the interview.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA FINDINGS, DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION**

This chapter presented analysis of data gathered from participants (divorced custodial parents and key informants) and interpretation. First it dealt with socio-demographic characteristic and then the discussion and interpretation of the findings of major themes. Clear data analysis and discussion were presented with meaningful interpretation in an attempt to respond to the specific objectives of the study. The focus was on the participant's perceptions about the effects of divorce on psycho-social wellbeing of children and parent-child intimacy quality.

#### **4.1. Profile of Participants**

This section presents demographic characteristic of the participants comprising custodial parent and key informants. Because the custodial parents are the guardian of children and share those post-divorce stressful experiences with children, their participation was believed to be helpful to gather deep and detail information about children's wellbeing. Key informants also provided professional perception because they are only associated in line of their duties.

##### **4.1.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristic of Custodial Parents**

Concerning age of respondents, the result shows that 11 respondents age ranged between 20-30 years, 7 between 31-40 and only 3 respondents between the ages of 41-50 years old. The findings show that, the majority respondents who are executing their marriage or committing divorces are the younger people or those amongst between 20-30 and 31-40 years of old. This result agreed with aster 2015, that suggests within the age of 30 most marriage ends up in divorce.

As for gender of respondents, 2 of them were male, while the rest 19 participants of the study were female. The distribution of respondents by gender depicts that those who usually are taking the custody of children after divorce were a mother. Seemingly, responsibility of taking custody of child has everything to do with socially constructed role of gender.



**Table 4.1: Frequency Distribution of Respondents by gender and age**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Female	19	90
Male	2	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
20-30	11	52
31-40	7	33
41-50	3	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2023

The result of Aster 2015 also indicates that women are more responsible for caring their children than men after divorce. However, given the fact that mother's position in term of economic gain, compared to fathers, the responsibility of custody shouldn't be left only to mothers, because economic disadvantages can influence their ability of providing comprehensive parenting, after divorce.

**Table 4.2: Frequency Distribution of Number of Years Since Divorced**

<b>Years since divorced</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
< 1	2	9.5
1-3	13	62
4-5	6	28.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2023

With regard to, years of experiencing divorce, as Table 4.2 shows, 2 respondents experienced divorce for less than 1 years, 13 (62% ) for 1-3 years, and the last 6 respondent experienced divorce for the last 4-5 years. From this, one can conclude that majority of respondents were divorced in the last 1-3 years.

**Table 4.3: Frequency Distribution of parent by education and occupation**

	<b>Level of education</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Primary school	4	19.05
2	Secondary school	7	33.3
3	Diploma	6	28.6
4	BA degree	4	19.05
	<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100</b>
	<b>Occupation Level</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Civil servants	7	33.3
2	Private worker	5	23.8
2	Self employed	7	33.3
3	Unemployed	2	9.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2023

In an attempt of identifying the educational and occupational level of custodial parents the result indicates that, out of 21 respondents, 4 were completed primary education and other 7 end their education at secondary school, while 4 are degree and 6 are diploma holder. And regard the occupation, about 33.3% of the respondents were found to be self-employed, and another 33.3% government employees. While 23.8% of respondents are private worker, the rest 9.6% of respondents are unemployed. From this data, it is possible to suggest that the majority of respondent are categorized under low educational and occupational level, which are indicatives of low level live standard of the participants.

**Table 4.4: Marital status and number of children from ex-husband**

	<b>Marital status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Single custodial	<b>14</b>	<b>67</b>
2	Remarried	<b>7</b>	<b>33</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100</b>
	<b>Number of child from ex-husband/wife</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	1 child	14	66.6%
2	2 child	5	23.8
3	3 child	2	9.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2023

As it illustrated in table 4. 4, out of 21 custodial respondents 14 were not remarried, while the rest remarried again after divorce. The table also reveals that a majority of the respondents (66.6%) have 1 children from ex-couple, while 23.8% and 9.5% had 2 and 3 children's respectively. According to this data, the substantial number of respondents had only one child, and there was no respondent with more than 3 children. This implies most mirages in the study area end up in divorce only after the couples having one child.

#### 4.1.2. Socio-Demographic Characteristic of Key Informants

This part summarizes the key informant's background information focusing on the age, sex, profession, job experience, work position and their association with divorced family.

Table 4.5, reveals that the profile of key informant included a total of 5 respondents, and out of them 3 (60%) were female, 2 (40%) male. The study participants whose age ranging from 20-30 were 2 (40%), another 2 respondents equals to 40 percent aged between 31 and 40 years, while the rest 1 respondent laid between 41 and 50 years of ages. The data suggests that most of the respondents covered in this survey were female, and none of these respondents' age were reached 50 years.

**Table 4.5. Educational level of Participants**

	Sex	Age	Education level	Year experience	Work place
1	Female	46	Degree	10	The Federal First Instance Court Yeka 2 <sup>nd</sup> family Bench judge
2	Female	27	Degree	4	Women and Social Affairs office
3	Female	37	Diploma	6	Association for Women's Sanctuary and Development /AWSAD/
4	Male	29	Degree	7	Social Work Professional
5	Male	34	Degree	8	The Federal First Instance Court Yeka 2 <sup>nd</sup> family Bench judge

Table 4.5 also shows that 80 percent of the surveyed respondents possess Bachelor Degree certificates, 20 percent possess diploma, certificate. Identification of respondents according to their work experience and institution was conducted. And table 4.5, shows

that out of 5 respondents, 4 (80%) of them had work experience of 6-10 years, while 1 respondent's work experience was with 4 years of. And again the table stated, 2 official participants from the Federal First Instance Court Yeka 2<sup>nd</sup> family Bench judge, another 2 from women and child affairs institute and 1 from child friendly court were included in study for interviews. As shown in this table the participant official's work position and experience were in domain of family affairs which give hopes that the study built on reliable information.

#### **4.2. Effects of Divorce on Children's Social Wellbeing**

The first objective of the study was to identify social effects of divorce to child wellbeing. In doing so 21 custodial parents and 5 key informants were asked through an interview, and the result shows that except for 4 participants reported for not seen specific change in terms of social wellbeing, the rest all respondents were specific to mention the change they came to witness socially on children after divorce. Nonetheless, respondents were well aware of the effects of divorce on social wellbeing of children. After having time with participants the researcher realized that, apart from divorce itself, the factors such as socio-cultural, economic, and parents coping ability are amongst the contributor to escalate the effects of divorce on social status of both parents and their children.

The evidence in custodial participant's narrative reflecting the interpersonal problem that a divorce had on children were mentioned as social stigma, for example; *you know, the social issue hurts the mother more, because it is not their fault. But children also can be victim of it. Divorcing or single parenting isn't very uncommon in my community nowadays. But the society still does treat you as not normal. For example, people stigmatized you, even I feel its pressure on my children, their friends' attitudes. It does worry them but they don't really talk to me about it.*

This reinforced by other participant who talks about societal influence; *you are not the same person in the eyes of your parent, sibling or relatives, like it's your fault to divorce. This doesn't end with parents only, because I clearly saw this on my daughter, that sometimes she get bullied and stopped going out to play with neighbor children.* The description drawn from this data implies that following the divorce, children's perception

is that they are leading unsatisfactory social lives. The report also ascertains nonconformity of parent to have positive attachment with children, define as abandonment or unhealthy relation. Bethlehem, (2016), found out those children from a divorced family have unsatisfactory social or interactive skills.

Respondent's word, regarding how post-divorce family's living arrangement, income constrain and role strain jeopardize children's social life; *I've consciously tried not to blur the roles of child and mother. I've always used to done everything at home. But following the divorce many things has to change to keep the rest family member together. Since my daughter turned 12, she has taken on a tremendous responsibility. She has been the women of the house. I realize that this is costing her connection with friends and enjoy playing as a child. I want to admit that this domestic work is isolating her, making her less sociable.* In collaboration with this, Thiong'o E, (2015), found out that divorce led to shaken children's trust on others and they showed decline in the standard of living in the custodial household.

Residential change and emotional instability of the parent are also hindering social wellbeing of children. For example; *my ex-husband care less to his children and care more to his addiction. So I decided to divorce because, but things aren't easy as I thought they would be. Soon after divorce, I wasn't good emotionally and we moved from our previous place, whereby we leave the society, friends and school we knew. my children found it hard to make a new friend in new settlement.* Consistent with this, Mamoon K, Khalid U, Khan K and Zahra M. (2018), due to Talking with their friends in school has become a hard task for children, and they avoid situations that require interaction with friends a lot more.

There was also respondent who said; *If by social wellbeing you mean healthy relationship with people, one of my daughter became very aggressive, in school and neighborhood with children she fight a lot. She fear her father more than me but now since they are not together she fear no one. Besides that, I don't have much time with them to control and monitor. I think that's why she became like this.* Another respondent also added; *readjusting our life back was the hardest problem. It makes me aggressive and sensitive I cry a lot and curs a lot. Sometimes, seemingly, I took my anger on my*

*children. What worries me most is that they hated me and behaving badly like being deviant person.* This might be associated with parents awareness about letting their children to mix with others would result stigma and bully which can hurt children emotionally. Nonetheless, abstaining from interacting with others greatly can hurt child's interpersonal relation skill.

Key informant also reported, *I think children of divorced family have a great exposure to disrupted pattern of social norm and values. Some of them suffering from fearful, they isolate themselves from friends. Some of them run away from home and be stubborn. Because single parent alone not enough to monitor and provide constructive guidance, this leads them into getting in trouble more often which has a huge impact on their social life.* Sociologists argue, much of the personality make-up of individuals is forged at the childhood period in life. A child who experienced dysfunctional marriage will most likely be deficient in his/her social relation. Esther B. (2020) also confirmed that Parental divorce influences children emotionally and impacts their future relationships, dating and marriage.

In fact, it is often difficult to separate the countless number of factors that impact children socially, following divorce. This research has found that the primary social effect of divorce is declined parent-child relationship quality. Though the extent vary, thus divorce related stresses that parents have to deal with are greatly influencing children's interpersonal relation skills. For example, less time with the non-custodial parent and the instable environment in the family are notable factors that had the greatest impact on children's wellbeing socially, mercy M. 2017. Moreover, children face the problem of adapting new surroundings, social stigma, low life standard and emotional upheaval that influence their interpersonal relation in and outside home. Further, majority of the participants were specific to mention, isolation, stigma, declined interpersonal relation, disrespectfulness and being shy, as social effects of divorce that they come to notice on their children. The impact underpinned by Shanny. M. 2017, also include, loneliness, lack of confidence, lack of basic needs, and lack of interpersonal communication skills.

## **Case 1**

**When we look at one story that parental divorced children told me during the field work,**

Once upon a time, there was a family consisting of a mother, father, and their four children, two boy and two girl. The family was close-knit and enjoyed spending time together. However, one day the parents decided to get a divorce. After the divorce, the children felt the social effects of the split. They had to adjust to living in two different households, and they missed having both parents around all the time. They also had to deal with the reactions of their friends and classmates, who sometimes treated them differently after learning about the divorce.

The parental divorced children informant struggled to cope with their parents' separation in different ways, he withdrawn and stopped participating in sports and other activities he used to enjoy. He also started to struggle in school and became less social.. As time went on, the social effects of the divorce continued to impact the children. They sometimes felt like they didn't fit in with other families because they didn't have both parents around all the time. They also had to deal with the challenges of maintaining relationships with both parents and their extended families.

Despite the challenges, the children eventually learned to adapt to their new circumstances. They found new ways to have fun and make friends, and they learned to appreciate the time they spent with each parent. They also learned to communicate their feelings and seek support when they needed it.

The story of this family illustrates the social effects of divorce on children. Divorce can be a challenging time for children, and it is important for parents to support their children through the social changes that come with a split. Parents can help their children by listening to their concerns, encouraging them to express their emotions, and providing a stable and supportive environment (**Source: Primary Data**).

### **4.3. Effect of Divorce on Children's Psychological Wellbeing**

The second objective of the study was to examine the effect of divorce on the psychological well-being of children's. Here, all interviewed respondents acknowledge

the negative psychological effect of divorce on child. In fact the information, from custodial and key informants indicated that both parent and children suffer psychological dysfunction. The respondent approached to explain the psychological effects of divorce on children. More less the same pattern emerged; custodial responses were focused on their own emotional upheaval toward their children's psychological stresses. Which means that the parents are the first victim and then it spoiled their children.

Example, regarding emotional suffering of parents and how it affect children“ *it affect all of us, I break down in tears for my child pain, for what happen to. I understand that my children needs me now more than ever, but sometimes I can be instable emotionally because I worry about their future that I don't have sufficient deposit, that they don't have anyone else to help them. I am sacrificing a lot for the thing to go back to the way they were before. But children they don't understands this so this situation made them nervous and even feel insecure, sometimes they get upset and complain with me.* The fact that children of divorce experience different strands of emotions makes it imperative that parents work closely together in ensuring the stability of the children. Esther B, (2020) the result of parental divorce to children is it shapes children emotionally and mood swings and irritability.,

Besides, due to financial and emotional stresses, parents may not realize how their children are feeling and suffering. A word of respondent is that; *I think I am projecting my emotion and behaviors on my child. I used to think it's only me who was going through this difficulties until one day my daughter break her silence and said to me that how much she wished our old life, before divorce, for both of us. This is how I realized that she is also suffering with me.* Bethlehem 2016, similarly suggested more often children get in trouble after divorce. Children exhibit emotional variations development over time as they experience parental conflict or the divorce of their parents.

Another respondent reported about children experiencing the feeling of inferior, shame and embarrassed compared to their friend with intact family. Marcy W, (2015), suggests that since the divorce of their parents, children have become more closed minded and are no longer open to new ideas. *I can't give my children the life they deserve. From my work I earn little money so how I could give all she wants that. And because I can't buy her all*



*what she need she can't compete with her friends. She used to tell me my friend has this and that, and I don't. I understand how she get embarrassed, with our living standard and my job, and how this is hurting her emotionally.* Consistent with that is, Bethlehem, G, (2016), confirm that children's receptivity to learning is compromised by emotional distress they come to experience after divorce.

There was a respondent father, who was specific to mention psychological problems, lack of motivation and happiness, insecurity and aggressiveness, *my daughter is suffering by moving between the two houses, our and her grannies houses. And I want say that the major impact that divorce has on my child is psychological. I know things are difficult for her in grandparents' house because she is not happy and always complaining about living there, she lose motivation for school, she quarreled with grannies and she feel insecure. But I need her to attend school for her own good so I have no other option but to let grannies to help.* This result inclined that children of divorce are more likely to be treated differently with sympathy, and it causing emotional and sentimental deficiencies that later on might become part of their attitude and behavior. Mercy Wawira, 2017, also found out that most child respondents were discomforted by school mates and teachers love or sympathy about their family situation, and they find it so hard to control what they feel and be in a good place emotionally.

Also the key informants added the following narration; *I think children from broken home are more disturbed psychologically. Most of the time couples see divorce as a solution to their disagreement and parents can be benefited from separation. And at that moment, process of divorce, they forget their children, by focusing on their feelings and economical problem. However, these strange situation is not normal for children, they start perceive themselves as different, because they are not getting both parents love and care, comparing with the fellow friends whose parents are together. Some may be very sad and fearful, and some may be disobedient or hel and they became more vulnerable to develop antisocial behavior. This is more common in a family with low income, as the majority of our customers are poor family. I couldn't suggest to any of this children to be left without psychological help.* Consistently, Mucaj and Xeka (2015) suggest that the effect of parental divorce is highly with how children feel about their life including their

happiness that resulted from stressful post-divorce events along with disruption of relation with both parents.

From the above narration it is true that both parents and children suffer psychologically in post-divorce scenario. However, the worst thing is, many parents are absorbed in their own problems and there was non-conformity in physical availability of parents as they focused on earning income, and it is hard for them to recognize their children's needs. And the absence of emotional and physical support of parents delaying children's adjustment to divorce, and importantly they are at risk of depression, insecurity, low self-esteem, and behavioral problems. Mundalomo, (2016), Parents might not be able to identify or unaware of how the divorce is emotionally affecting the children. Moreover the researcher identified sadness, grief, lack of confidence, depression, anxiety, stubborn, disobedient, attention seeking, aggressive and lack of motivation as major psychological problems. Shanny. M. (2017), also claimed the psychological impact of divorce on children includes, sadness, lack of attention, lack of confidence, feeling guilty, isolation and behaving badly.

## **Case 2**

### **When we look at one story that parental divorced children told me during the field work,**

After the divorce of their parents, the children felt the psychological effects of the split. They had to adjust to living in two different households and dealing with the absence of one parent. The children felt like their world had been turned upside down, and they struggled to make sense of the changes in their family.

The boy and girl reacted to the divorce in different ways. The boy became angry and rebellious, acting out at school and getting into trouble with the law. He felt like he had been abandoned by his father and blamed his mother for the split.

The girl, on the other hand, became anxious and withdrawn. She struggled with feelings of guilt and blamed herself for the divorce. She also worried about her mother and how she was coping with the changes.

As time went on, the psychological effects of the divorce continued to impact the children. They struggled with feelings of insecurity and instability, wondering if their family would ever be whole again. They also had to deal with the long-term effects of the split, including the impact on their future relationships and their sense of self-worth.

Despite the challenges, the children eventually learned to adapt to their new circumstances. They sought out therapy and support groups to help them deal with their emotions, and they learned to communicate their feelings to their parents. They also found new ways to connect with their parents and rebuild their relationships.

The story of this family illustrates the psychological effects of divorce on children. Divorce can be a traumatic experience for children, and it is important for parents to recognize the psychological impact it can have. Parents can help their children by providing a stable and supportive environment, communicating openly and honestly, and seeking professional help when needed (**Source: Primary Data**).

With regard to psychological influence, custodial parents were better in explaining the effects of divorce on their children. Accordingly, all of the informants reported that their children were suffering from different psychological problems like depression, upset, anger, frustration and loss of confidence.

#### **4.4. Effect of Divorce on Parent-Child Relationship Quality**

The third objective of the study intended to assess post-divorce parent-child relationship quality. Respondent's perspective is that Parental divorce is highly affecting the parent-child relationship quality. Respondents were asked about effect of divorce on parent-child relationship and the response from respondents follow the same pattern of the above objectives. Common feature of most custodial parents were that they experience the delaines of managing their emotional difficulties and continued hostile relation with ex-husband and soundings, which enviably they spoil on their relation with children. For example participant said;

*Even before divorce I suffered a lot to because of my husband's behavior. I quite my education when I get married and I almost abounded my parents. So everyone hated me since. The first two-three years, after divorce, was the worst time of my life. Besides, I*

*have no one to call for help. Most of the time I feel angry and disappointed with everything and everyone, and most of the time I have lost affection to my child, and we quarrel most often.* According to family system theory, the most common way of dealing with this stress or divorce is emotional distance and avoidance. This might be because the yielding parents are not fully applied sensitiveness and responsibilities, due to emotional dysfunction of parents that resulted from stresses. The findings of Shanny M (2017) also indicated that 45% of children in divorced family face lack of proper care and love of parents.

In most case, immediately after divorce, as the parents were trapped by, doing job and dealing with the labeling of divorced person in society, they face the ambiguity of prioritizing the love, care and guidance and role strain which deteriorate productive parenting style; *Immediately after divorce all I think was about how am going to deal with readjusting my life and all societal and emotional pressure. But when the kids start asking stuffs, like close, food..... I start business and be strict with my children, because I want them to succeed in their life, with good manner. But I never realized, till you ask me now, that I forget to give them motherly love and closure. Because I swallowed by other things, I have no time to my children, so there closure is with our house made, even they discuss and share issues with her. I think this is my fault.* The feelings of abandonment experienced by the participants might come from the lack of or lessen contact, specially, with the non-custodial parent and emotional unavailability custodial parent who dealing with adjustment. Therefore, children in this broken family prone to feel fear of being rejected, and a lack of trust often retards firming of their relationship. BrooKe and FeeneY, 2008, Negative aspects of the mother–child relationship that contribute to adjustment problems include maternal depressive mood, child fear of abandonment, which mediates the link between mother–child relationship quality and both internalizing and externalizing.

Another respondent stated that the children suffer more from a loss of contact with their non-custodial parent, who is usually the father. Respondent father said; *in a sense of affection. I wouldn't say that this family had affection. You know we live in different house, and because women's are believed to be good with rising children I let my son to*

*live with his mother. But eventually we lost contact and he start sees me differently. Specially, after I got married someone else, he disinterested in my visit. This is not because of I stopped caring about him, rather I want him to grow with my affection, knowing that I love and care for him. But his mother turns him against me.* This discloses that, thus parental divorces are influencing the parent's ability with regard to their emotional involvement in building strong positive emotional attachment. Bethlehem, 2016, similarly, found out that the performance of parents is not satisfactory in encouraging and control their children's efforts. Furthermore, according to, (Amato, 2001), a less positive emotional involvement from parents, following divorce, lead children to hold more negative expectations towards intimate relationships and might reduce children's social competence.

The family systems theory suggests that negativity from disruption of relation in a family (e.g., couples) spill over others (e.g., parent-child), such that the family produce hostility, antagonize communication and aggressiveness in the relation with their children. This reinforced by key informant who said; *when parent separate the child has to choose either of one, this mean the child has to have connection with one side. These can completely change the usual pattern of relationships as family. Usually because mother takes custody of child, the child doesn't have close relation with their father. However, because of most divorced women surrounded by different problems they can't give the proper care and affection. The relation can be deteriorating with both parent but mostly with father.* Similarly, Shimkowski, 2012, also found out children, experiencing higher levels of antagonistic communication with parents, after divorce.

Furthermore, the researcher can't ignore the fact that gaining the custody of a child can be used to create positive parent-child relationships. Among the few, example of one respondent is; *I'm too soft with my kid. If my daughter need or she had something in mind, she discussed it with me. I think we have strong attachment than ever.* Therefore, this study suggests that children of divorced family are suffering from deterioration of parenting style that can result low level of parent-child attachment. In this interview, it has been identified that following divorce, parents were usually preoccupied with their own emotional responses to divorce which leads to a diminished parenting of the

custodial parent, who is usually the mother. Similarly, (Feeney & Monin, 2016), suggested, following divorce, parents might fail to provide an effective care-giving function to their children, such that the outcomes will be lower wellbeing, insecure attachment styles and negative parent-child relationships.

Hence, from the above narration it is evident that children of divorce experiences lower relationship quality with both parents. Stressors associated with the divorce are usually accompanied by physical and emotional absence and deterioration in the parenting of both parents. As the parents were focus on dealing with stressful events they might be less sensitive to their children's needs, and eventually it leads to hostile communication and alienation with their children. (Lee, 2019), divorce affect parents' appraisals, emotions and behaviors, leading them to be less sensitive to their children's, which in turn, negatively impact the quality of parent-child relationships. Nevertheless, the study suggest that Non-custodial parent's relation with children are the worst one, because custodial parent can use taking custody of a child an opportunity to maintain their relationship with child. However children usually suffer from the absence of Non-custodial parent's involvement in their lives. Mabuza, Thwala and Okeke (2014) contend that many children feel negatively towards the non-resident parent who left them.

Under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the provision of material, cloth, food, health and educational...etc. and the care and emotional support, are among the essential duties of parent. However, children are facing shortage of material and emotional helps from parents were reported in interview. In response to that, the child sometimes complains and show anger towards a parent, rather than clinging and attached toward parents. In confirming this, Garg, Melanson, & Levin, 2007, argued that Single parents, custodial mother, are often depleted of their resources, time, energy and emotional stability that could be spent in fostering relationship and child wellbeing, after the divorce.

Finally, the researcher interviewed the key informants a question regarding consistency of the experience of all children or the effect of divorce to all children. The results show that four participants felt that these effects were not consistent with all children of divorce. Only 1 participant felt that it was consistent with all children. In reasoning this,

example of participants statement is that; *the children's personality, quality of their relation with parent, life standard and coping skills are determinant to resist the impact of divorce. But all children are not the same in those essences. Some are fortunate with this and some are unfortunate, in a sense of dealing with the consequence of divorce.*

Another informant make the family's background responsible for inconsistency of divorce impact for all children, participant wrote about parent's situation; *the parent's financial and emotional ability to readjust their life is also important. When parents are strong enough to support their children, the children can also recover fast. Most divorced mother come here crying and complaining about the tuition that husband has to cut. Some families complained about property share. Every divorced family has different problem, therefore the children also expose to different problems.*

Another respondent's perception was; *one way or another, children could suffer due to the separation of their parents. It's inevitable for all children to lose one of the parent. Even in those families with good financial position, divorce has its ways to get to them. This children misses their noncustodial parent, mostly, they can't get the father's emotional support, guidance, love...etc. and this can leave some whole in their life.*

This finding is consistent with finding of Diana M.(2012), which shows that thus effects of divorce were not consistent with all children of divorce. Every divorce is different and is handled in a different way. Effects of a divorce can also depend on the families respond and coping skill. However, all children from divorced family has to experience turbulent home environment that, at least, resulted from the departure of one biological parent, which was not there before divorce. Similarly, Rachel C. (2021) suggested that the absence of one natural parent has a negative influence on the psychological well-being of a child. Because there is certain advantages accrue from living with two natural parents.

### Case 3

**When I look at one story that parental divorced children told me during the field work,**

Once upon a time, there was a family consisting of a mother, father, and their two children, a boy and a girl. The family lived in a beautiful house, and the children went to a good school. However, one day the parents decided to get a divorce.

After the divorce, the mother and father split their assets, and the mother and children moved into a smaller house. The father continued to pay child support, but it was not enough to maintain the same standard of living the children were used to. The mother had to work long hours to make ends meet, and the children saw less of her. They also had to switch schools to a less prestigious one because the mother couldn't afford the tuition fees.

The children felt the effects of the divorce in other ways as well. They missed their father and felt torn between their loyalty to him and their love for their mother. They also felt guilty, wondering if they had caused the divorce in some way. As time went on, the economic effects of the divorce continued to impact the children. They had to give up extracurricular activities and couldn't go on as many vacations as they used to. They felt like they were missing out on experiences that their friends were having. Despite the challenges, the children eventually adapted to their new circumstances. They learned the value of hard work and appreciated the things they did have. They also learned to cherish the time they spent with their mother and father, even if it was less frequent than before.

The story of this family illustrates the economic effects of divorce on children. Divorce can be a difficult and stressful time for children, and it is important for parents to consider the impact it will have on their children's lives (**Source: Primary Data**).



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter presents summary of major findings of the study and draws some important conclusions from the empirical results of study. Moreover, based on the conclusions, some recommendations regarding the effects of divorce on social and psychological wellbeing of children are formulated. This thesis has examined the effect of divorce on the social wellbeing of the children, the psychological dysfunction of the children due to divorce and the post-divorce intimacy between parents and children in Yeka sub city of Addis Ababa City Administration.

#### **5.1. Summary of Major Findings**

This study was carried out in Yeka sub city with the main purpose of investigating psycho-social effect of divorce on children's wellbeing. The specific objectives were; to examine the effect of divorces on child's psychological wellbeing, effect of divorces on child's social and to assess the effect of divorce on parent-child relationship quality. To achieve the objectives, the study used exploratory research design because the study sought to gain insight into what the children were experiencing due to parental divorce. Both primary and secondary data sources were used, while the primary data were gathered through in-depth interviews and KII as instrument of data collection. The study was framed within family system theory and attachment paradigm to indicate how family structure change, in this case divorce influenced the children's wellbeing in different aspects. Due to the nature of the data obtained from participants, the study employed qualitative analysis of data. Here below, the findings of the study and the answers to the proposed research questions were summarized:

The findings affirm that, following parental divorce, the social well-being of children are more likely affected. Participants were asked about how parental divorce came to be associated with children's social disposition, and surprisingly majority of them demonstrated that divorce related factors like social stigma, living arrangement, relocation and low income are greatly influencing both parent and a child's social

wellbeing. parents were exhibited a difficulty of sharing opinions and feelings to their children, which constraint parents role, as primary care giver, in facilitating socialization of children. The finding indicated that decline in children's social competency begins with lowered parent-child relationship quality, and then through time the social competences of those children have become diminished.

After having a data analysis, the study results revealed that the presence of strong association between parental divorces and children's psychological wellbeing. All interview participants acknowledged sadness, grief, lack of confidence, depression, anxiety, stubborn, attention seeking, lack of motivation as significant psychological disadvantage of children pertaining to parental divorce. And thus, increased emotional instability of the parents, financial crisis, socio-cultural constraint and new living arrangement, following divorce, are also stated as factors that influences the children's psychological state.

Regarding the child-parent relationship quality, the interview report exhibited that significant number of interviewees believed that parental divorce is negatively influencing child's relationship with both parents. The study found out in post-divorce situations parents were usually occupied with responding to with stressful events that made them lose their sensitivity, care and affection to their children which resulting emotionally alienation of child from parents.

In fact, the KI interview reported that immediately after divorce, both parents and children go through emotional difficulties. Similarly, custodial parents exhibited lower level of physical and emotional availability and support which are more likely to result change in child's attitudes toward their parents, such as hate, distrust and low tendency of dependability on their parent. From interview data it has been established that losing contact or less time with child, strict parenting style, focus on finance and neglecting provision of love and care and emotional instability of parents were amongst those resulted low relationships quality

## 5.2. Conclusion

It was concluded that there was a negative relation between parental divorce and social wellbeing of children. Although it has difference in the extent of its effect on children, children are suffering socially from declined interpersonal interaction, social stigma, low life standard, trust issue, introverted personality, difficulty of making new friend, managing challenges in day-to-day life and avoiding being in company with other, to the extent that experiencing divorce at this age affects how they feel about marriage and family.

Similarly, parental divorce has adversely affected children's psychological wellbeing, in the sense that psychological effect is dominated, followed by low attachment quality then social. This study proved that, though slight variations, most of the children were similar to their peer experienced psychological difficulties, such as, insecurity, depression, lack of motivation, emotionally sensitiveness, fear of self-expression, low self-esteem, hopelessness, acting out and manifestations of pitiable emotion, as they were exposed to stressful situation in and outside the house, which was enough to influence the way they feel about themselves and view the rest of the world.

Finally, the study concluded that the diminished parent-child relationship has been negatively influencing psychosocial aspect of children in divorced family because divorce affects parent-child relationships quality by deteriorating child's attachment pattern with parents especially with non-custodial parents, low level of physical and emotional availability of parents, lack of basic need provision, appreciation, attention, and antagonized communication between parent and child and feeling abandonment. Nonetheless, the study suggested that the parent-child relationships may not always changed negatively for both parents. Because, taking custody of the child perhaps can give leverage to the custodial parents to maintain their relationships with children. As a result, keeping post-divorce stresses in mind, some custodial parents can build positive attachment with child.

### **5.3. Recommendation**

Based on the study findings and conclusion, the following recommendation are forwarded:

#### **Implications for Social Work Practice**

Being parent-child relationships is mediator to facilitate or hinder psycho-social wellbeing of children, parents should set up a routine to spend time with their children and understand their feelings and challenges that they encounter in order to overcome them and make them happy.

Parents should love their children with the same love and concern they use to give before and help their children financially, emotionally and morally so that children can express their problems and challenges freely to them. This will help them to reduce stress and enjoy parental love, care and feel like they are protected.

Those divorced and separated parents should be educated on the importance of supporting their children and the effects of not supporting them materially and emotionally. Therefore, when marital conflicts arise which do not threaten the life of one partner or both, they should not use divorce as the option when settling such rising tensions.

#### **Implications for Social Policy**

It is recommended that the need for the civil society to set programs that empower and counsel divorced parents to enable them overcome any post-divorce challenges and foster psycho-social wellbeing of both parent and child. The civil societies should mobilize people about the effect of divorce in order to be aware and care their families.

Government organization, such as Family court, justice office, women's and social affairs institutions should work together to ensure the continuity that all divorced couples should take their parenting responsibility and children's right seriously.

Government need to employ social workers who will assist with mediation to reduce post-divorce crisis whereby children will feel part of the decision making process after

the divorce, and avoiding exposure of children to risk factors, especially high conflict and emotional, verbal or physical violence, given overwhelming evidence of negative effects.

The study recommended that education policy of Ethiopia to include school counselors, prioritizing best interest of children of divorced family, around parental capacity to provide warm, responsive and supportive relationships, and take into account the child's developmental stage, wishes, needs, concerns, and capacities to cope with change.

### **Suggestions for Future Social Work Research**

The study finding suggested that the effect of divorce on parent-child relationships doesn't always the same for all divorced family and for both parents (custodial and noncustodial parents). Because children usually live with custodial parents, in this case with mother, very few custodial parents in the study were being able to maintain their relationship with children positively than ever. However, those non-custodial (fathers) identified usually as having very little contact and involvement in their children's lives, than custodial parents. Moreover, the finding of the study suggested that positive association between quality of child-parent relationships and psycho-social competency of children need to be researched by the prospective researchers.

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Appendix 1

**Interview questions for custodial parents of Yeka sub-city at Wereda 8 and 9**

**Dear parents**

The objective of this question is for partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Master of Arts Degree in social work. These questions are designed to collect data about the major effect of divorce and its consequences on children's life.

The data collected from these questions will all be used for the research purpose only. And also all the collected data will be kept only in the hands of the researcher. I hereby request you to be open and honest while responding so that the research could succeed and achieve the intended goal.

**THANK YOU IN ADVANCE FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION!!!**

**PART I - Background information**

Name..... Age..... Sex..... Place of birth.....

Educational level..... Household number.....

Sub-city..... Wereda..... Date of interview.....

**The Effect of Divorce on Social and Psychological Well-Being of Children?**

- a. What are the effects of parental divorce on children's social life?
- b. What are the psychological dysfunctions of children of divorced parent?
- c. What are the effects of parental divorce on child-parent's relationships quality?
- d. How is the academic performance of your school attending children after divorce?

**Thank you!**

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**Appendix 2: Interview Questions for key informants**

**Dear key informants**

The objective of this question is for partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Master of Arts Degree in social work. These questions are designed to collect data about the major causes of divorce and its consequences on children's life.

The data collected from these questions will all be used for the research purpose only. And also all the collected data will be kept only in the hands of the researcher. I hereby request you to be open and honest while responding so that the research could succeed and achieve the intended goal

**THANK YOU IN ADVANCE FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION!!!**

Sex \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ C, Address \_\_\_\_\_ Name of your organization? \_\_\_\_\_ Work position? \_\_\_\_\_ and experience \_\_\_\_\_ Educational level \_\_\_\_\_

1. You and the organization you working in how familiar with the divorcees and post-divorce children's experience
2. How do you see parental divorce and children's wellbeing?
3. What is the major psychological and social consequence of divorce to children in divorced family? How this relate with other aspects of the child well-being? Explain \_\_\_\_\_
4. Are these effects consistent with all children who experience divorce? Please explain with regard to gender and age difference
5. Does the parental divorce affect parent-child relationship and how this affects children negatively? Explain the difference of parenting in intact family and broken family?
6. Any other additional comments \_\_\_\_\_