

## Original Article

## Relationships between parents and adolescents after divorce in Tehran city

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## ABSTRACT

**Background & Aim:** This research examines the change in the attitude and trust of adolescents to their parents after divorce. It seeks to find whether the attitude and trust between adolescents and their parents change after divorce?

**Methods & Materials:** Participants in this study were 30 adolescents with divorced parents in Tehran; of these, 50% were boys and 50% girls. Interviews and questionnaires were used to collect the data. In general, 58 indicators were used to examine adolescents' relationships with parents. The indicators are arranged in three dimensions of moderation, intimacy, and conflict.

**Results:** Testing the measures showed that the rate of talking with a teenager after divorce decreases and father's cry on his child increases. Moreover, the degree of father's disregard his teenager before and after divorce has not shown a significant difference. This issue is completely different about the relationship between mother and her teen.

**Conclusion:** The result of the study showed that in a divorce, the relationship between adolescent with the parent's changes, and the relationship between the adolescent and the father undergoes more changes in comparison to the relationship with mother. The survey also showed that attitudes and trust between adolescents and parents have changes as a result of divorce.

**Introduction**

Divorce means the collapse of the most important institution of socialization in the human society. Today, many young people experience divorce. A lot of research has been done on divorce each of which has revealed one dimension of this phenomenon, but mostly investigated the causes and effects of divorce. After divorce, many families with child or children are unaware about their future status. There is still no divorce culture in Iranian society to support children after divorce. The total number of divorces registered in the country in the year 2016 was 165981; the highest amount belonged to Tehran metropolitan area (1).

Divorce is a difficult experience for all those involved and it may affect the adolescents in different ways. Studies have shown that a divorce can lead to many problems for

adolescents such as crime, aggressive behaviors, delinquency, and low self-esteem (2). Some studies also have focused on the economic situation of parents after divorce. A divorce can put parents in a bad economy so that the interaction between teenager and parent will change in negative method due to stress, lack of accuracy, and many other factors (3).

This research seeks to examine the way of change in the relationships between parents and adolescents as a result of divorce. It tries to find whether divorce can change the previous mentioned dimensions of an adolescent life.

Relationships with parents are important for teenagers, so studying relationships before and after divorce seems interesting. If anyone wants to study how divorce change these relationships, he must first be aware of the natural change in this regard. Trusting a person can be a key to adolescent health. Parents are very important for teens and they often play the role of someone who is trusted for children. It is a natural issue that the involvement of parents in the lives of

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children decreases over time and gradually increases from early childhood to late adolescence. The presence of parents leads to a situation in which adolescents feel they are more important persons. Some of these situations can bring the teenager back for help and support to their parents. Some situations can have a reversible change. If stressful stimuli are high, parents can be great support for their teenager or vice versa. These emotional relationships are still unknown after the divorce. Earlier research on divorce suggest that these emotional relationships after divorce can greatly change both the attitude of the parents toward the adolescent and the attitude of the adolescent toward the parents. Moreover, it can reduce adolescents' trust to parents in a variety of ways. Therefore, it is very important for a teenager to have a good intimate relationship, and stay away from any tension. Hence, there is no answer for the large gap of knowledge in this regard, as it is the problem of this research. Accordingly, the present research investigates whether divorce can change the emotional relationships between parents and adolescents, whether moderation and intimacy of parents and adolescents' changes after divorce, and whether adolescents have the same trust to parents before and after divorce.

This research focuses on two main questions:

A) Does the attitude between parents and adolescents change after divorce?

B) Is the confidence between adolescents and parents affected by divorce?

Sometimes these stressful stimuli can create conditions that prevent adolescents from leaving their parents (4).

By discovering and deepening knowledge of a phenomenon under discussion, research on divorce can provide its scientific and widespread knowledge and promote community culture in the field of marital culture as well as to formulate appropriate social programs for the health of the family institution by preventing consequences and harmful effects of divorce. The divorce rate in Iran is increasing day by day, provided that this great social dilemma accompanies with family dissolution and has serious bad effects.

In cases where young people are involved in a divorce, it seems that parents' divorce without a worry and regardless of the fact that divorce affects the lives of their children. Separation of parents has harmful adverse effects on children.

The importance of this issue lies in the fact that Divorce children will be harmed physically, psychologically, and even physically. This causes a lot of problems, including the transformation and change in their relationships with parents, as well as the reduction of trust between the two sides. For example, divorce can change the relationship of a teenage girl primarily with his or her parents and, in the next levels, with other people outside of their families and ultimately with the community. The problem of divorce children is known in industrialized countries, and these communities have found their own special solutions. Iran is not yet ready to cope with this new problem. In the industrialized countries, they have developed a code of conduct to identify the problems of divorced children and call it "divorce culture". The purpose of this culture is to look at the status of divorce children in these countries. Unfortunately, such a culture has not yet been seriously formed in Iran. Accordingly, conducting such research seems necessary. In addition, it is a great help for formation of a divorce culture in the country.

After the divorce of parents, children of different ages experience different mental states; for instance, children develop feelings of anger, fear, and depression in the first year of parental separation (5).

The subjects of differences in couples' education, differences in the level of thought and knowledge of couples, excessive attention paid by spouse to children, differences in parenting, and number of children have been examined by divorce and its multiplicity in the current society create a kind of tolerance that reduces its evil status. Consequently, people think of divorce when dealing with the first problem (6,7,8).

Kalantari (9) have concluded in this regard that marriage age and age difference of couples are the most common divorce factors; then, one can respectively count levels of education and educational differences of couples, family factors and issues, substance abuse, committing crimes, and psychological disorders as factors affecting divorce. Timothy et al (8) compared with children raised in single mother families created by the death of the father, children raised in divorced single mother families have significantly lower levels of education, occupational status, and happiness in adulthood, yet, divorced single mothers are not different

than their widowed counterparts in child rearing, gender role, and family values and religiosity, health – related behaviors, and other dimensions of lifestyle.

Tianyi et al (11) have article about “The interactive effects of marital conflict and divorce on parent- adult children`s relationships” this study examines main effect and interactive models of the relations between marital conflict. Divorce, and parent –adult child relationships and gender differences in these relations. Results indicated that both marital conflict and divorce are associated with poorer quality parent-adult child relationships. Divorce moderated the link between marital conflict and subsequent negative in mother-child relationships, with the estimated effects being stronger in cautiously married families than in divorce families, especially for women.

Cohen et al (12) studied divorce related communication between mothers and children. That is a qualitative study. The mothers` reports convey the challenges and dilemmas they faced when communicating with their children about their divorce and its repercussions, the main one being their obligation to maintain a good father image and their wish to preserve a strong maternal figure (12).

Many parents have concerns about the implications of dating (and subsequent breakups) on their children`s wellbeing. Yet, little is known about the ways in which mothers` post-divorce dating breakups influence children`s development. According to family systems theory, the effect dating breakups have on children`s behavior may be more dependent on the rapport children have with mothers` dating parents than the event of a breakup itself. Result indicated no main effect of breakup on children`s problem behavior (13).

Divorce is one of the terrible and sad consequences of life, which is naturally unavoidable for a large group of people. Although parental separation in this process sometimes helps them to have a very different future, unfortunately, most children are hurt in this way and even find themselves guilty (14).

The effect of divorce on children can be fear and anxiety, anger, obsession, depression,

aggression, restlessness, mental and physical harm, fear of the future, guilty feelings, disturbance in development, pessimism to parents, emotional deficits, and anomalies (15).

Children of any age have their own psychic need. Divorce threatens to meet these needs. The quality of the relationship between children and parents is one of the most important factors that can determine the divorce consequences for children and clarify or diminish the future of children (16).

The family institution is extensively experiencing divorce in the world of the present world. Changes in family and divorce rates increase in Iranian society have created social concerns. Family status, the quality of relationships between family members, and its collapse is the reflection of social, cultural, and economic conditions on the one hand and it is the effect of internal factors as well as its quality on the other hand.

Adolescence is a sensitive and decisive age in every person`s life because many of the problems that young teenagers face in the future are the result of the very sensitive period (adolescence).

Therefore, paying attention to the teenager in this period is one of the key principles in shaping the quality of one`s behavior, personality, and deeds in the future. Hence, more studies should be conducted in this regard. However, divorce has been accepted as a bitter reality in society and, of course, one of its harmful effects is the teens who are going to form the future of society. Therefore, a broad social movement in this area should be carried out so that, if possible, adolescents suffer less from divorce harms.

Most parents who want to divorce are worried about their children's response to divorce and their separation; they want to know if their children will have a healthy life. From previous studies, it can be seen that the phenomenon of divorce has been studied in various aspects.

With respect to psychological factors paving the way for divorce, factors like nervousness, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety, lack of interest, excessive pessimism are investigated by (17) and (18).

Researches have shown that the impact of divorce depends on age of children at the time of divorce. If divorce occurs when the child is very young, he will probably not suffer much. However, there will be some problems if the relationship between the parents and the child breaks down. For example, teens may show anger, fear, loneliness, depression, and feelings of guilt. Some teens may feel that they have lost their parents' support. They may doubt about their ability for marriage and keeping common life.

Teens may know the causes of their parents' divorce. Their ability to recall conflicts and stress arising from divorce may interfere with their ability to deal with changes in their future family. They may also feel that they are under pressure to select one of the parents or to regard one of them guilty in divorce.

Boys who grow up alongside their father and daughters who grow up with their mother may be better than those who are raised alongside their opposite parents. Boys living with their father seem less aggressive. Moreover, Girls who grow up with their mothers become more responsive and they have higher intellectual maturity in comparison to girls who grow up with their fathers. In spite of these issues, the adaptability of children to divorce depends more on their relationship with their parents rather

than to their gender and age. The role of parents has been observed differently throughout history. Sigmund Freud and Margaret Mahler centered on motherhood (19). Freud believed that the relationship between mother and child is more important, and Mahler agrees with Freud. According to Mahler, the mother and the child, together, create a coexistence that helps them much in future. In fact, the father's role as the communication center between parents and teens was studied for the first time in the middle of the twentieth century and in 1970 only on a few fathers. The role of the father was well studied and the result showed that role of the father is especially important for adolescents (20-23).

### Methods

In this survey, the data were collected through interviewing and filling out 3 Likert type researcher-made questionnaires (questionnaires 1-3). For the theoretical background, library study was used; the statistics needed for this study were extracted from National Organization for Civil Registration. The research population included all Tehranian adolescents whose parents divorced between 2010-2016, from whom a sample of 30 individuals were selected via snowball sampling. Inferential statistics with respect to their variances were used for data analysis. All analytical steps were performed

#### Questionnaire 1. Moderation indicators for adolescents' relationships with parents

<b>Moderation</b>	- My mother cares for me with his words and actions.	Never Very little
A. Mother's moderation	- My mother does a little work with compassion.	Sometimes Often
6 items	- When I am with my mother, I am proud of myself.	Always
	- My mother shows her love for no reason.	
B. Father's moderation	- My father cares for me with his words and actions.	Never Very little
6 items	- My father does a little work with compassion.	Sometimes Often
	- When I am with my father, I am proud of myself.	Always
	- My father shows her love for no reason.	
C. Parents' judgment about adolescent	- They do good things for no apparent reason.	1) Do not do at all 2) Do not do well
4 items	- Hey do little to show their inclination.	3) Sometimes they do, sometimes they do not
	- Without any reason, they show that love parents, regardless of what we do.	4) Doing a fairly good job 5) Exactly do

**Questionnaire 2.** Intimacy indicators for adolescents' relationships with parents

<b>Intimacy</b>	Adolescents' share inner thoughts with parents	1. How do you express your inner thoughts with your father or mother?	1. Yes, definitely 2. Yes, to some extent 3. It depends 4. Only to some extent 5. Not at all
	Five items in five-item scale	2. Do you feel worried when you feel yourself? 3. Do you say your private matters to your father or mother? 4. Do you talk to your parent about private matters just as easily when you talk to your friends?	
	Adolescents' talking about internal issues of the house	Do you talk to your parents about classroom and school at home? Do you talk to your parents about what you are doing at your leisure? Do you say anything to your parents about the things you do at the end of the night or the weekend? How do you talk about your common educational demands?	1. Almost, very much, yes, always 2. More often, often, yes, sometimes 3. Sometimes, yes, often 4. just a little, not, rarely 5. Not at all, no, never
	Five items in five-item scale		Five-item scale
	Mother	1. I feel that my mother shares my thoughts and feelings 2. My mother calm me when I'm upset or angry 3. 3. Every time I need my mother, I know that she is there	
	Five items in five-item scale		
	Father	1. I feel that my father shares my thoughts and feelings 2. My father calm me when I'm upset or angry 3. Every time I need my father, I know that he is there	Five-item scale
	Five items in five-item scale		
	Parents' judgment about the amount of sharing issues by adolescent	1. Do children keep their secrets hidden? 2. Do they talk to their parents about private activities that they do at night or at the end of the week? 3. Do teenagers talk with parents about different education issues and school as well as teacher? 4. If the teenager is outside the house some nights, does he/she talk to his/her parents?	A. very much, yes, always B. most times, often, yes, C. Sometimes, yes, D. just a little, no, rarely E. Not at all, no, never
	Five items in five-item scale		

through SPSS v.19 software.

**Research Hypotheses**

Hypothesis 1: The status of the moderation variable before divorce has a significant difference with its status after the divorce.

Hypothesis 2: The status of the intimacy variable before divorce has a significant difference with its status after the divorce.

Hypothesis 3: The status of the conflict variable before divorce has a significant difference with its status after the divorce.

**Results**

Of the 30 samples, 50% were boys and 50% were girls. The average age of respondents was about 16 years; the minimum and maximum age was 13 and 18 years, respectively.

The term parent-child relationship refers to the unique and enduring bond between a caregiver and his or her child. To understand the parent-child relationship, we must look at the ways that parents and children interact with one another physically, emotionally, and socially.

**Questionnaire 3. Conflict indicators for adolescents' relationships with parents**

<b>Conflict</b>	In a conflict, mother	1. How talk Decreases in post test	1. Talking immediately 2. Politely wanted to know what you did, why did you do it? 3. Trying to figure out how you think and feel? 4. Trying to speak without any new tension?	At all little Somewhat A lot Totally
	Three dimensions			
		2. Shouting Increases in post test	1. she was very rebellious and angry 2. In an angry way, she told me to be silent 3. It's a hard moment to control anger 4. Loudly complained	At all little Somewhat A lot Totally
		3. She was unaware of his teenager	1. How long does it take to talk to you? 2. How cool is she about you? 3. How much does he not listen to you, as she does not accept your opinion?	At all little Somewhat A lot Totally
	In a conflict, father	4. How talk Decreases in post test	1. Talking immediately 2. Politely wanted to know what you did, why did you do it? 3. Trying to figure out how you think and feel? 4. Trying to speak without any new tension?	At all little Somewhat A lot Totally
	Three dimensions D16=dd16			
		5. Shouting Increases in post test	1. He was very rebellious and angry 2. In an angry way, he told me to be silent 3. It's a hard moment to control anger 4. Loudly complained	At all little Somewhat A lot Totally
		6. He was unaware of his teenager	1. How long does it take to talk to you? 2. How cool is he about you? 3. How much does he not listen to you, as he does not accept your opinion?	At all little Somewhat A lot Totally
	Three levels of classification for the appearance of parents during a conflict	A. Start an agreement B. Squatting and rebuking C. Quiet and cool	Never Sometimes Mostly	

The purpose of the parents–adolescent relationship study is to offer a learning experience for parents and adolescents working together to improve their skills in the areas which are the foundation for healthy family living: 1) perceiving each other, 2) communicating effectively, and 3) recognizing behavior as a function of its consequences (24).

Relationships between teens and parents, especially after divorce, are very important. But in Iran, the issue of how children relate after divorces with their parents is not addressed. Now let's take a look at the hypotheses in this study.

**Hypothesis 1:** The status of the moderation variable before divorce has a significant difference with its status after the divorce.

To test this hypothesis, the construct of moderation has been divided in three dimensions of mother's moderation, father's moderation, and parents' judgment. Then, the variables have been examined before and after divorce using T-statistics in two paired groups. The results are as following. According to the results of Table 1, there is significant difference between the amount of mother's moderation before and after divorce so that the mean of mother's moderation before divorce is 12.37 and the mean of mother's moderation after divorce is 17.13. Moreover, there is no significant difference between the amount of father's moderation before and after divorce. In addition, there is a significant difference between the amount of parents' judgment on the adolescent before and after

**Table 1.** T-test for determining the significance of moderation before and after divorce

		Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean difference	T	Freedom Degree	Significance level
Mother's moderation	Pre-test	30	12.73	4.49	1.49	4.83	29	0.000
	Post-test	30	17.13	3				
Father's moderation	Pre-test	30	15.86	3.45	0.4	1.33	29	0.149
	Post-test	30	16.53	3.41				
Parents' judgment about the adolescent	Pre-test	30	10.1	2.92	0.44	6.361	29	0.000
	Post-test	30	12	2.48				

divorce so that the mean of parents' judgment on the adolescent decreases after divorce.

**Hypothesis 2:** The status of the intimacy variable before divorce has a significant difference with its status after the divorce.

To test this hypothesis, the construct of intimacy was divided in four dimensions of adolescent's share inner thoughts with parents, adolescent's talking about internal issues of the house, sharing external thoughts of home with mother, and sharing external thoughts of home with father. Then, the variables have been examined before and after divorce using T-statistics in two paired groups. The results of are as following.

According to Table 2, there is a significant difference between the amount of mother's intimacy before and after her divorce so that the mean of mother's intimacy has been 11.93 before divorce and 14.53 after divorce. Moreover, there is no significant difference between the amount of father's intimacy before and after divorce. As findings show, there is no significant difference between sharing internal thoughts with parents before and after divorce. In addition, there is a significance difference in talking about external home issues by adolescents.

**Hypothesis 3:** The status of the conflict variable before divorce has a significant difference with its status after the divorce.

To test this hypothesis, the construct of moderation has been divided in three dimensions of talking, shouting, and disregarding the adolescent. Then, the variables have been examined before and after divorce using T-statistics in two paired groups. The results of are as following.

According to the results of Table 3, there is a significant difference between the amount of mother's talk before and after divorce so that the mean of mother's talk before divorce was 7.97 while it has decreased to 6 after divorce. Moreover, there is a significant difference between the amount of mother's shouting before and after divorce so that the mean of mother's shouting before divorce was 12.37 while it has increased to 15.8 after divorce. In addition, there is no significant difference between the amount of mother's disregarding adolescent before and after divorce.

Findings indicate that there is a significant difference between the amount of father's talk before and after divorce so that the mean of father's talk to his child increases after divorce.

**Table 2.** T-test for determining the significance of intimacy before and after divorce

		Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean difference	T	Freedom Degree	Significance level
Mother's intimacy	Pre-test	30	11.93	2.44	2.6	4.674	29	0.000
	Post-test	30	14.53	3.30				
Father's intimacy	Pre-test	30	14.30	3	0.13	0.212	29	0.834
	Post-test	30	14.43	2.71				
Adolescent's share of inner thoughts with parents	Pre-test	30	12.8	3.57	0.27	0.638	29	0.528
	Post-test	30	12.53	2.91				
Adolescent's talking about issues out of the house	Pre-test	30	16.66	3.33	1.47	2.739	29	0.010
	Post-test	30	18.13	3.14				

**Table 3.** T-test for determining the significance of conflict before and after divorce

		Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean difference	T	Freedom Degree	Significance level
Mother's talking	Pre-test	30	7.97	2.61	1.97	4.857	29	0.000
	Post-test	30	6	1.75				
Mother's shouting	Pre-test	30	12.366	2.91	3.43	6.933	29	0.000
	Post-test	30	15.80	1.97				
Mother's negligence on her adolescent	Pre-test	30	10.53	2.20	0.47	1.765	29	0.088
	Post-test	30	11	2.57				
Father's talking	Pre-test	30	11.6	2.91	1.47	2.907	29	0.007
	Post-test	30	10.13	2.55				
Father's shouting	Pre-test	30	6.73	3.46	2.67	5.368	29	0.000
	Post-test	30	9.4	3.27				
Father's negligence on his adolescent	Pre-test	30	10.53	2.72	0.17	0.549	29	0.587
	Post-test	30	10.7	2.46				

The results show that there is a significant difference between the amounts of father's shouting before and after divorce so that the mean of father's shouting at his child increases after divorce.

The research report that there is no significant difference between the amounts of father's disregarding adolescent before and after divorce. It means that the amount of father's disregarding after divorce is the same as its amount before divorce. When their parents divorced, some children faltered and others thrived (25).

### Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to find out whether the relationship between parents and adolescents changes as a result of divorce. The results of this study have added new findings to previous studies on divorce. The results indicate that the adolescent's relationship with father is influence more that one's relationship with father. Moreover, the results of this study showed that the attitude and trust of the adolescent to the parents' changes after the divorce. Besides, the level of change in adolescent's attitude and trust in the parent depends on the "cause of divorce". The attitude of an adolescent whose parents have divorced due to mother's betrayal has been more intense in comparison to issues like addiction or other factors. Studies showed that many fathers spend less time with their sons after divorce; in some cases, fathers disappear after divorce. This research has not intended to test the amount times a father spend with his son; but it has tried to show the effectiveness of divorce on emotional relationships between fathers and adolescents. In order to find a new concept for this phenomenon, one should assert that divorced fathers do not have good emotional

relationships with their adolescents in most cases. While parents have been present, there have been more effective persons in the life of adolescents to affect their prosperity or grief. The teachings of tradition have dominated the society until recently; this factor has decreased the rate of divorce in society. Due to a phenomenon called modernity, followed by many other issues, society faces a major dilemma in divorce today and the number of children whose parents have divorced, especially young people who are extremely sensitive, increases every year. We need to think fundamentally so that these teenagers are less likely to suffer social and psychological harm. Although divorce has been denounced both in terms of culture and of religion, this phenomenon is taking place. The best way is changing cultural attitudes to divorce; in this way, divorce children are less likely to be harmed.

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### Conflict of interests

None conflict of interest have been observed.

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