FACTORS INFLUENCING WOMEN ATTITUDE TOWARDS DIVORCE -
A STUDY IN PALAKKAD DISTRICT, KERALA

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Abstract

Context: Divorce is the termination of a marriage or marital union between a married couple under the rule of law of the particular country and/or state. Divorce laws vary significantly around the world but in most countries it requires the sanction of a court or other authority in a legal process. The context of divorce has changed and also the rate divorce increased in the past decades.

Methods: The main objective of the study is to identify the factor influencing women attitude towards divorce. The data were collected from 231 married women (both working and not working) in the District of Palakkad, Kerala through purposive sampling. Both primary and secondary data was included in the study.

Results and Conclusion: The result revealed that women attitude towards divorce is closely associated with women employment, spousal adjustment and children’s wellbeing. Premarital counseling for boys and girls will provoke change in the attitude towards divorce among young generation. Awareness generation and counseling among married women is one of the ways to decrease the rate of divorce at present society. Both men and women cope up with their personal problem and should take responsibility in the family to avoid divorce.

Key words: Attitude, Children, Divorce, Factor, Employment, Women.
Introduction

The social context of divorce has changed in the past hundred years. In traditional societies, divorce was considered a violation of the marital contract. Prior to the eighteenth century, families were the sole instruments of socialization and learning, as well as the basic unit of most economies. Such an unstable marriage was a threat to the community. Divorce is a legal dissolution of the marriage agreement by a court or any other body that has competent authority. Earlier days society existed based on traditional norms and divorce was not acceptable. Adultery was the acceptable cause for divorce in that period.

Divorce rates are higher among lower social classes, perhaps because “personal differences are necessarily evaluated with less tolerance when economic resources are low” (Furstenberg 1979:95). However, the presumed effect of income and social class may be due to employment stability (Cherlin, 1979). If a husband has an unstable work history, he is likely to earn a lower income; he may also have a lower status in the eyes of the community, a lower self-image, and a lower pleasure with his life and marriage. These factors will increase his wife’s frustration as well. Many families attempt to achieve economic stability by employing both husband and wife. A wife’s income may have two opposing effects on a marriage. The couple would have a higher standard of living, which would presumably increase their overall satisfaction; however, an income also includes an autonomy effect. The wife has means of surviving on her own, which may increase her willingness to divorce if she is unhappy and finds a better alternative to her marriage (Cherlin, 1979).

In earlier days, women were treated as equal to god. At that time they enjoyed all the rights equal with men, but after some centuries, their status decreased day by day due to social norms and traditions. During the British period, the status of women became better than earlier. During that period, they implemented certain laws for the advancement of women. Based on that, the Indian Divorce Act was also passed but it was enacted by the Indian government during the year 1969. Divorce comes under personal law. Divorce or disbanding of marriage is the final termination of a marriage, canceling the legal duties and tasks of marriage and dissolving the bonds of matrimony between married persons. In most countries, divorce requires the permit of a judge or other authority in a legal process. Divorce laws vary considerably around the world. It is not permitted in some countries, such as in Malta and in the Philippines, though an annulment is permitted.

Marriage shall be a success, only if the parties involved are happy, and it should not be based on societal pressure, family pressure, etc. Marriage through family pressure leads to divorce. Higher divorce rate is actually a thing to be welcomed in India because it translates to more freedom, liberation and empowerment for women. ‘In western countries, a divorce does not declare a marriage null and void, as in an annulment, but divorce cancels the marital status of the parties. Where monogamy is law, this allows each partner to marry another. Where polygamy is legal, divorce allows the woman to marry another.’

Two decades ago, the State of Kerala had a very modest divorce rate. But now Kerala has the highest divorce rate in the country, and family courts are busy with divorce petitions. (Kerala News, April 2013). Thiruvananthapuram, the State capital, is the capital of divorce cases too.
according to the data provided by the State Government. The district has 6,000 divorce cases in 2011 in its two family courts, at Thiruvananthapuram and Nedumangad. The court reports that “Adjustment between partners is a major problem of many cases. There is an increasing trend in the marriages from 2002 for divorce (Times of India 04, 2013). ‘The rate of dowry is high in the southern districts. There are instances where the husband asks for more dowry after the birth of a girl. There are many cases of the husband and his family demanding more dowries after the marriage of the wife’s sister by comparing the amount,’ (Times of India 04, 2013, p.5).

The economic consequences of divorce also tend to be more different for women than for men, with women typically more disadvantaged. Pre-divorce family standard of living is an important consideration in measuring economic decline after divorce. Although the economic well-being of divorced women (and their dependent children) plunges in comparison with pre-divorce levels, their former husbands often enjoy a better financial situation after divorce.

Objectives of the Study

The study has the following objectives. It aims
1. To study the profile of the respondents and analyze the relationship between personal profile and the respondent’s attitude towards divorce
2. To study the factors influencing women attitude towards divorce.
3. To examine the relationship between attitude to divorce and personal variables.
4. To offer suggestions for reducing the rate of divorce.

Methodology

The study has used both primary and secondary data. For collecting primary data the interview schedule has been used. The variables involved in the study were identified from preliminary interview with 23 respondents and review of related literature. The samples were collected from 231 respondents in Nemmara Grama Panchayath, Palakkad District. The secondary data required for the study have been collected from text books, journals and related websites.

Sampling

The study was conducted in Palakkad District which comprises of 13 Blocks. Among these Nemmara Block has been selected for the study through purposive sampling. In Nemmara Block there are seven Grama Panchayath at present, among these in Nemmara Grama Panchayath the number of female population is higher than other panchayath in that case Nemmara has been selected for the study. Purposive sampling has been used for the study. The data has been collected only from married women (both working and non working) under the age group 20-50 years. 250 samples were randomly collected from Nemmara Grama Panchayath. However incomplete schedule were deleted and 231 was finalized for the study. Only the married women have been included for the study and their opinion about divorce is analyzed throughout.

Validity and Reliability

A pre-test was conducted to validate the interview schedule and to confirm the feasibility of the study. The data have been collected from 25 respondents randomly from the study area and Cronbach’s Alpha Criterion was applied to test the reliability. The value determined is 0.748 proving the reliability of the instrument. The quality of the questionnaire was ascertained and the
test showed high reliability. The variables considered for the analysis satisfied the normal probability distribution. Based on the pre-test study, the interview schedule was modified suitably and finalized.

**Tools of Data Collection**

The study has used interview schedule. It was initially developed after reviewing the literature. Based on preliminary interview and suggestion of the experts the tool was finalized. It consists of 54 questions of which 16 questions are related to background information, 14 questions are related to attitude to divorce, 8 questions related to women and employment, 5 questions are about divorce and children’s well-being, 11 questions consist of spousal adjustment and divorce.

**Scope of the Study**

The study is confined to study the attitude of women towards divorce in Palakkad District. Duration of the study (data collection) is from 1st May to 20th June 2013. During this period married woman who come under the age group of 20-50 years have been included in the sample. The study has been conducted from the point of view of married women who are working and non-working. The study also made an attempt to gain the knowledge about attitude towards divorce among married women.

**Framework of analysis**

The statistical tools such as Mean and Standard Deviation, One-way ANOVA, Correlation, have been used to analyze the variables in the study.

**Findings of the Study**

**Profile of the Respondents**

57.1 per cent of the respondents are in the age group of 21-30 years, 34.2 per cent of the respondents have studied up to secondary school level, 48.1 per cent of the respondents are homemakers, 14.3 per cent of the respondents earn Rs 5001-10000 per month, 76.2 per cent of the respondents got married between the age of 18-21 years, 53.7 per cent of the respondents have two children, 62.3 per cent of the respondents belong to nuclear family, 79.7 per cent of the respondents are Hindus, 46.3 per cent of the respondents belong to Backward Caste, 66.2 per cent of the respondents’ family income is 5001-10000 per month.

93.5 per cent of the respondents got their marriage arranged, 64.1 per cent of the respondents have 2-5 members in their family, 56.7 per cent of the respondents have 6-10 years difference between the partners, 38.5 per cent of the respondents are live together after marriage for 6-10 years, 94.8 per cent of the respondents living with their husband, 92.2 per cent of the respondents do not know the procedure for applying divorce under Indian Divorce Act and 23.4 per cent of the respondents suggest that counseling, advice and awareness will decrease the rate of divorce.

**Attitude of Women towards Divorce**

Divorce is against Indian culture has high mean score (4.4113).

After divorce women face economic insecurity has high mean score (4.5238).

Women are more responsible to take care of children well-being has high mean score (4.5281).
Divorce disorganizes the family structure has high mean score (4.3810).

**Relationship between personal profile and attitude of women towards divorce**

There is no significant association between personal profile and women’s attitude to divorce. There is significant association between period of separation and women’s attitude to divorce.

There is no significant association between personal profile and women employment. There is no significant association between personal profile and children’s wellbeing. There is significant association between period of separation and children’s wellbeing.

There is no significant association between personal profile and spousal adjustment. There is significant association between attitude to divorce and women employment. There is significant association between children’s well-being and spousal adjustment.

**Children Well-Being and Spousal Adjustment**

Chi-square test was applied to find whether there is any significant relationship between children’s well-being and spousal adjustment. Table 1 presents chi-square test for children’s well-being and spousal adjustment.

Null hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between the children’s well-being and spousal adjustment.

Table 4.1 reveals that the chi-square value (.039) is lower than the 0.05 level of significance at 95 per cent level of confidence. This is statistically significant. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. So it is concluded that there is statistically significant association between the children’s well-being and spousal adjustment.

**Table 4.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children’s Well-being and Spousal Adjustment- Chi-square test</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>273.532(^a)</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>199.697</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>.949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>1.234</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>231</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(a\) 263 cells (98.9%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .00. 

Source: Primary data

Table 2

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Correlation between Attitude to Divorce, Women’s Employment, Children’s Well-being and Spousal Adjustment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Attitude to Divorce</th>
<th>Women’s Employment</th>
<th>Children’s Well-being</th>
<th>Spousal Adjustment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitude to Divorce</strong></td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>231</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women’s Employment</strong></td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.230**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children’s Well-being</strong></td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.153*</td>
<td>.178**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spousal Adjustment</strong></td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>.212**</td>
<td>.073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.326</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Primary data

It is observed from above table 2 that Karl Pearson’s coefficient of correlation has been administered to find whether there is any relationship between attitude to divorce, women’s employment, children’s well-being and spousal adjustment.

It was found that attitude to divorce score has high degree of positive correlation (.000) with women’s employment at 1 percent level of significance; attitude to divorce score has positive correlation with children’s well-being (.020) at 5 percent level of significance.

Women’s employment score has high degree of positive correlation with children’s well-being (.007) at 1 percent level of significance. Spousal adjustment has high degree of positive correlation with women’s employment (.001) at 1 percent level of significance.

**Conclusion and Suggestions**

Premarital counseling for boys and girls will induce change in the attitude towards divorce among young generation. It is necessary to create employment opportunities for women seriously. Knowledge about Indian Divorce Act, Domestic Violence Act and Sexual Harassment Act should be spread among men and women to reduce the rate of divorce. Awareness generation and counseling among married women is one of the ways to decrease the rate of divorce at present society. Both men and women should take responsibility in the family to avoid divorce. Society and the Government should come forward for the rehabilitation of women divorcees. Society should encourage women divorcees to remarry. Teachers should give counseling to the students about family, sex, value system prevailing in the society at school and college levels. Social and religious organizations can start family counseling centers to
solve the family problems. Partners should have mutual understanding, sacrifice, and mutual respect for the welfare of the family and children’s career.

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