

The psychological effects of parental divorce on the behavior of preschool children

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Abstract

This study focuses on parental divorce and its psychological effects on the behavior of preschool children. Currently, an increase in the number of divorces is observed and is associated with a psycho-social problem that affects the healthy development of children. The study aims to address this issue. The study employed the quantitative methodology. A 6-point Likert scale questionnaire was used to measure the attitudes and evaluations of the respondents regarding the negative consequences of parental divorce for preschool children. The study aimed to help divorced parents and kindergarten teachers to increase the quality of educational work with this category of children.

Keywords: *Preschool children, parental divorce, psychological effects of divorce.*

Introduction

Ending a marriage or terminating a marital union is one of the most difficult events that a couple can experience in their interpersonal relationship (Bhushan, 2022). In such circumstances, divorced parents should make a concerted effort to positively influence both their child and themselves, to minimize the pain and discomfort associated with the period following the divorce (Desmarchelier, Bryce, Schaffer, Lawrence, & Cantrell, 2022).

This study primarily focuses on preschool-age children with divorced parents because it is a particularly sensitive period in a child's life. While young children may seem to quietly navigate their parents' divorce, it is crucial to provide them with adequate psychosocial support during this period. Without proper support, these children may suffer the consequences of parental divorce later in life (Sorek & MYERS-JDC-Brookdale, 2019). As such, this topic is the object of this study with the aim of clarifying the negative consequences of divorce on children and assisting divorced parents and kindergarten teachers in the field of preschool education (Cao, Fine, & Zhou, 2022)

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Literature review

The subject of divorce or dissolution of marriage is a complex and multifaceted issue, encompassing not only legal problems but also social and psychological challenges (Cabılar & Yılmaz, 2022). In other words, divorce is both a civil and a juridical process; can only be enacted through a court decision.

Divorce signifies a dissolution of the shared unit, such as the family as an institution (Lenuța, 2022). Both men and women have the right to marry and establish a family without restrictions based on race, nationality, or religion. They are equal during the course of a marriage, continuation of the marriage, and its dissolution (Gazeta Zyrtare e Repunlikës së Kosovës, 2006). The reality is that not all marriages are intended to last forever, the dysfunctional family and miscommunication can lead to divorce.

As Adhami (2022) notes, divorce cannot exist without a prior marriage. It is important to recognize that divorce is not always the cure for life's challenges, on the contrary, it is a developmental process that unfolds over time and can be one of the most traumatic experiences for a child (Pushor & Amendt, 2018) Researchers highlighted that the consequences of divorce are many, and, in some cases, sometimes can significantly impact the emotional well-being of preschool children. It is, therefore, essential to acknowledge the potential difficulties and stressors associated with divorce, particularly as they relate to young children.

The purpose of this study is to explore the psychological impact of divorce on preschool children, with a focus on identifying effective techniques and strategies for managing their behavior. To achieve this goal and raise awareness of the issue, this paper provides a detailed examination of the psychological effects of divorce on children, with a particular emphasis on those that are most commonly observed in developed countries.

Understanding the effects of divorce on preschool children can help parents to better manage these effects and ensure a healthier life for the children. In recent years, many studies have been conducted on parental divorce's impact on preschool children, predicting consequences that can affect their further development.

Research indicates that compared to children of married parents, children of divorced parents tend to have more complicated relationships with other family members, poorer learning performance, and delayed psychological development (Saltmarsh, Ayreb, & Tualaulelei, 2022). Hence, it is

evident that the child's trauma and the separation of their two most beloved figures greatly impact their future wellbeing (Pushor & Amendt, 2018).

Parental divorce and children's stress

Divorce often results in children losing daily contact with one parent, typically the fathers. However, reduced contact can negatively affect the parent-child bond, and a 2014 study found that many children feel less close to their fathers after divorce (Anderson, 2014). Moreover, divorce can affect a child's relationship with the custodial parent, who is often the mother. Primary caregivers often report higher levels of stress associated with single parenting (Rodríguez, 2014). A 2013 study (Wallerstein, 2013) suggested that mothers are often less supportive and less affectionate after divorce. Their discipline also becomes less consistent and less effective (Wallerstein, Lewis, & Rosenthal, 2013).

For some children, changing schools, moving to a new home, and living with a single parent are additional stressors that make divorce difficult. Furthermore, financial hardships are often a reality after divorce, as many families need to downsize to smaller homes, relocate to different neighborhoods, and deal with reduced material resources.

Divorce is an emotional experience that brings children a range of conflicting emotions and feelings. Young children may worry that the divorce is their fault and may fear misbehaving or assuming they have done something wrong (Danjoli, 2021). This means that children are the ones who feel the tragedy of divorce the most. When children are minors, or, in this case, at preschool age (5-6 years old), they may not fully comprehend the situation, but the way they grow up (without parental love) leaves lasting impact on their future, on shaping their character and personality traits (Sorek & MYERS-JDC-Brookdale, 2019). Children become more emotionally sensitive. Divorce can make children emotionally overwhelmed and sensitive. Additionally, children may experience the effects of divorce through how they process their emotions. As they try to process their emotions, they may experience confusion and require someone to talk to and listen to their concerns.

In some cases, when children feel overwhelmed and do not know how to respond to the influences of the social circle, they may become angry or overly irritable. This anger may be directed at their parents, friends, and others. It often happens that this anger may disappear for many children after a few weeks, but for others, it may persist for a long time. Children are often very upset in the

initial moments of divorce, and many adults describe this period as the most painful time of their lives (Mali, 2014).

Feelings of guilt

Divorce is not a temporary event for children; it is a process that can last for several years. Children often wonder why a divorce is happening in their family and may wonder if their parents still love each other or if they did something wrong (Goodman, Emery, & Jeffrey J., 1998). These feelings of guilt are a common response to divorce in children, but they can also lead to depression, stress, and other mental health problems. As a result, the impact of divorce on children's behavior has been the focus of numerous studies and discussions in psychology, generating a special interest in social science researchers in general. (Sirvanli-Ozen, 2005).

A divorce is stressful for both parents and children. According to (Spremo, 2020), divorce creates emotional turmoil for the whole family, but the situation can be scary, confusing, and frustrating for children. Although reactions will depend on age, temperament, and the circumstances surrounding the separation, many children feel sad, frustrated, angry, and anxious; therefore, it is not uncommon for these feelings to have external reactions (Anderson, 2014). While divorce is stressful for the whole family, it mostly affects the children; some children experience it more easily, while others find it more challenging to return to normality. Most studies on children with divorced parents have indicated a decline in self-esteem and social competence as well as the development of emotional and behavioral problems (Amato, 2000).

Behavior Problems

Children from divorced families may experience more externalizing problems, such as conduct disorders, delinquency, and impulsive behavior, than in two-parent families (D'Onofrio & Emery). Apart from experiencing behavior problems, children may also face conflict with peers after their parents' divorce (Lund, 2021). Unresolved conflict during a divorce can lead to other unexpected risks in the future. Research has shown that children who experienced divorce 20 years ago were more likely to participate in criminal activities and other destructive behaviors that negatively impact their health. In addition, many children report developing habits such as smoking or using drugs. Divorce affects the child's relationship with the custodial parent, most often mothers. Children from divorced families (Bërxfholi, 2015) may experience problems such as conduct disorders, delinquency, or impulsive behavior. Children mainly show aggressive behavior, become unsociable, create addictions, and do not easily approach the social circle they belong to. These

behaviors are more noticeable in the early years after the parents' divorce and may fade over time (Çaksen, 2021). Along with behavior problems, children may also experience more conflicts with peers after a divorce (Lund, 2021). In this case, preschool children may also experience a lot of bullying from their peers in kindergarten and from friends in their family or social circle.

Mental health problems

Divorce can increase the risk of mental health problems in children and adolescents. Regardless of age, gender, and culture, children of divorced parents experience increased psychological problems (D'Onofrio & Emery). This is due to the fact that the effects of divorce on children are very stressful. Studies have also shown that the rate of depression and anxiety is higher in children since, during the divorce process, the degree of self-perception also increases when some children may face other issues that are even more personal, such as physical problems, any illness experience, sleep disorders, etc., which can cause clear signs of mental depression or psychological trauma in many cases.

Anxiety appears as the fastest emotional disorder during this crisis phase in the functioning of the family itself (Smith-Etxeberria , Corres-Medrano, & Fernandez-Villanueva, 2022). Several factors affect the experience of anxiety by children with parents in the process of divorce. Situations such as the non-acceptance of divorce by one parent, the lack of financial conditions to live separately, or in some cases, the abandonment of the child/children by one parent because the child sides with the other parent are also some of the factors that seem to affect the emotional state of children and seem to increase the risk of experiencing anxiety. However, it can be argued that the lack of attention toward the child is a common thread that underlies many of the aforementioned factors, and directly affect the experience of anxiety (Çaksen, 2021). According to child psychologist Carroll (2020), if a divorce occurs when a child is a baby, it is likely that the trauma of the divorce is nominal. *“Probably the only ages where you would say it has no meaningful impact is under two,” he explains.* This is mainly related to the development of a child's cognitive skills before the age of three. *“Even 2-year-olds have memory, so they are aware of the change on an emotional level rather than a cognitive one. The important thing that (Carroll, 2020) points out is that children are quite resilient, especially if they were psychologically healthy before the divorce. It may take a year or so to mourn or adjust, but most children adjust to their new reality. Of course, each situation is unique. In extreme circumstances, a child may feel relieved by the separation if a divorce means fewer arguments and less stress, which then affects the child's*

behavior in kindergarten or the family and social circle" (Carroll, 2020). However, there are other children who don't seem to go back to "normal" for a long time. Their behaviors start to become more disturbing. According to research, this is a small percentage, and this target group may experience ongoing, perhaps lifelong, problems after their parents' divorce (Short, 2002).

Through divorce, children are forced to learn how to adapt to changes over time. This means that new family dynamics, new homes or different living situations, kindergarten/school, friends, and others affect their psychology and behavior.

Divorced parent-kindergarten teacher communication

As awareness grows about the effect of parental divorce on children, an increasing number of families are realizing the need for effective communication. It is crucial for parents to communicate with their child's kindergarten teacher to stay informed about their child's behavior and progress in school. (Hoffman, 1995). Through communication, parents receive the necessary information about the progress of their child's behavior in kindergarten.

Parents are naturally concerned about their children's behavior in kindergarten, whether they are doing well or having difficulties. They rely on kindergarten teachers as the main source of information about their children's performance and need to collaborate with them. Kindergarten teachers can facilitate this by maintaining regular contact with parents through various channels (Lenuța, 2022).

The importance of collaboration between kindergarten teachers and parents has been emphasized in the "Law on preschool education," (Law No. 02/L-52 – 2006) (Kosoves, 2006). The law identified this cooperation as a key principle at preschool level. As such, the functioning of this component during the educational work with children of preschool age is the obligation of each preschool institution in general and of each kindergarten teacher in particular. (Plakolli & Aliu-Gashi, 2018). According to research, parents today are not only realizing new ways of relating to each other but also learning new parenting ways (Cabılar & Yılmaz, 2022). Parents play a major role in how children adjust to a divorce. But apart from that, she also suggests some strategies that can reduce the psychological effects of divorce on children. It is of interest to summarize these strategies below:

Co-parent peacefully. Intense conflict between parents has been shown to increase children's distress. Overt hostility, including screaming and threatening each other, has been associated with behavior problems in children. However, even the smallest tension can have a negative effect on

the child's well-being. As emphasized by Anderson (2014), if you struggle to co-parent with your ex-spouse, it is important to seek professional help (Anderson, 2014). *Don't put children in the middle.* Asking children to choose which parent they prefer or giving them messages to pass on to the other parent can be emotionally damaging. Children who find themselves "caught" in the middle are more likely to experience symptoms of depression and anxiety. It is essential for parents to communicate with each other directly and not involve their children in any disagreements or conflicts. *Maintain a healthy relationship.* Positive communication, parental warmth, and low levels of conflict can help children adjust to divorce better. A healthy parent-child relationship has been shown to help children develop higher self-esteem and better academic performance after divorce.

Empower your child. Children who doubt their ability to cope with change and see themselves helpless victims are at higher risk of experiencing mental health problems. It is important to teach your child that even though divorce is difficult to deal with, they have the mental strength and resilience to handle it. Encourage them to express their feelings, provide reassurance and let them know that it's okay to ask for help when needed. By empowering your child, you can help them navigate through this difficult time with confidence and a positive mindset.

Teach coping skills. Children with active coping strategies, such as problem-solving skills and cognitive restructuring skills, adapt better to divorce. Teach your child how to manage their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors healthily.

Help children feel safe. Fear of abandonment and concerns about the future can cause a lot of anxiety. But helping your child feel loved, safe, and calm can reduce clinginess and diminish the risk of mental health problems.

Seek parent education. Various programs are available to help reduce the impact of divorce on children. Parents are taught co-parenting skills and strategies for helping children cope with the adjustments.

Get professional help. Reducing stress levels can be crucial in supporting your child through a divorce. Practice self-care and consider talk therapy or other resources to help you adjust to the changes in your family.

When to seek help for your child. Although divorce is tough on families, staying together for the sake of the children may not always be the best option. Children who live in homes with a lot of arguing, hostility, and discontentment may be at a higher risk for developing mental health issues

and behavior problems. Consequently, after parental separation, it is normal for children to struggle with their feelings and behavior.

However, if your child's mood or behavior problems persist, seek professional help. Start by talking to your child's pediatrician. Discuss your concerns and ask if your child may benefit from professional support. The pediatrician may recommend talk therapy or other support services. Support groups allow children of certain age groups to meet other children experiencing similar changes in family structure.

Research methodology

To realize this study, the quantitative research method was used. A questionnaire with kindergarten teachers and divorced parents in preschool institutions in the municipality of Gjilan, Kosovo, was used to collect the study data. The methodology used in this paper aims to achieve the research aims and prove the hypotheses.

This research aims to identify the psychological effects that parental divorce has on the behavior and development of preschool children and to suggest appropriate ways how to inform them about their parents' divorce, how to ensure productive communication between kindergarten teachers and parents for a supportive approach toward the children so that they can get through the parental divorce as easily as possible.

Research objectives

The study has the following objectives:

- To provide enough information that helps to understand better the psychological effects of parental divorce on the behavior of the preschool child.
- To identify parental divorce's impact on the learning performance and behavior of children in the preschool institution.
- To suggest effective ways of communication between divorced parents and the preschool institution so that children get through the divorce period as easily as possible.

Hypotheses: The object of our elaborations in this research is the verification of two hypotheses: Hypothesis 1: Parents do not sufficiently recognize the psychological effects of parental divorce on the behavior of preschool children.

Hypothesis 2: Effective parent-kindergarten-teacher cooperation positively affects getting through the parental divorce event as easily as possible.

Research instrument

To collect data, a 6-point Likert scale (*Strongly disagree, Disagree, Partially disagree, Partially agree, Agree, Strongly agree*) questionnaire adapted for the field of education and in the context of Kosovo was used. This scale consists of 10 statements measuring the intensity of feelings, attitudes, and opinions of these respondents about parental divorce and how children are treated, with the aim that this category of children grows and develops normally and without problems in their future.

Divorced parents of preschool children and all kindergarten teachers of five preschool institutions in the municipality of Gjilan participated in this study. Fifty respondents, 30 divorced parents and 20 kindergarten teachers, filled out the questionnaire.

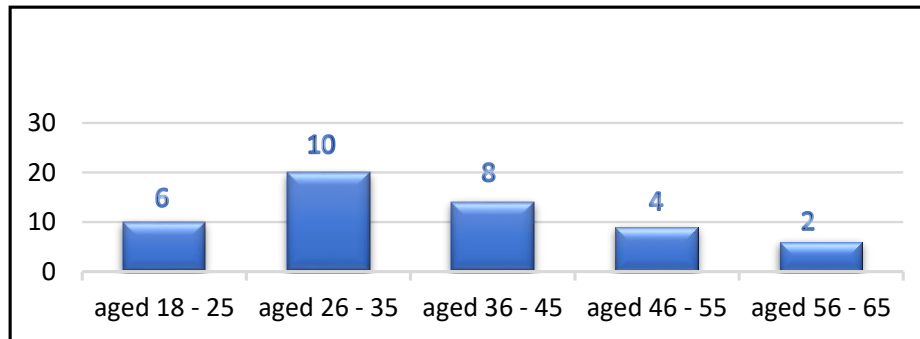
During the study, we made sure to adhere to the fundamental principles of research ethics. Prior to participating, all respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and were guaranteed that their identities would remain anonymous. We also assured them that the data collected would not be used for any purpose other than the study. Additionally, we ensured that all respondents were familiar with the format of the questionnaire and consented to complete it.

Results

Data collection and analysis in this study have adhered to the standard requirements of scientific research. The following procedure was followed for the data analysis: presentation of data for respondents, statistical processing, and graphic representation based on the statements of the questionnaire, presentation and discussion of findings, conclusions, and suggestions for further research. First, some data for the research respondents, 30 divorced parents for January-June 2022, are presented. Based on the research results: 20 (67%) respondents were female, while 10 (33%) were male. Figure 1 illustrates the data with numbers and percentages to get a clearer idea about the age of divorced parents. Regarding the gender of divorced parents, it is noted that the female gender (20 respondents) is more willing to provide information than the male gender.

Figure 1

Age of Respondents/Divorced Parents



Regarding the age of respondents in Figure 1, it is noted that 17% (6 respondents) were aged 18-25; 34% (10 respondents) were aged 26-35; 24% (8 respondents) were aged 36-45, and 15% (4 respondents) were aged 46-55. The smallest part of the respondents (2 respondents) were aged 56-65. This means most respondents (90%) who got divorced are young, while less than 10% are older.

Second, in addition to divorced parents, kindergarten teachers who work with children of divorced parents in preschool institutions in the municipality of Gjilan were also included in the study. Therefore, a total of 50 respondents (30 parents and 20 kindergarten teachers) agreed to complete the questionnaire. The collected data are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

The 6-Point Likert Scale Questionnaire Data

NO.	Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Partially disagree	Partially agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	The number of divorces is increasing in our community.	0	1	3	6	15	25
2	Children with divorced parents are treated fairly in our institution.	2	5	7	10	12	14
3	Divorce of parents affects the development of preschool children.	1	2	3	7	15	22
4	During the period of parental divorce, children of divorced parents experience anxiety.	0	0	1	3	4	42

5	Children of divorced parents are emotionally broken during a divorce, affecting their behavior in the institution.	2	3	4	5	6	30
6	Divorce of parents affects the child's learning performance.	2	2	4	7	8	27
7	The institution and the kindergarten teacher are informed about the divorce of the child's parents.	1	2	3	5	11	28
8	Timely information about the divorce helps get through the emotional state as easily as possible.	0	0	0	0	10	40
9	Divorced parents seek cooperation with the institution so the child can get through the divorce as easily as possible.	0	0	0	1	6	43
10	Institution/kindergarten teacher - Parents' cooperation positively affects getting through the emotional state as easily as possible.	0	0	3	5	12	30
	The number of respondents for each statement	8	15	28	49	99	301
	The number of points for each statement	8	30	84	196	495	1806

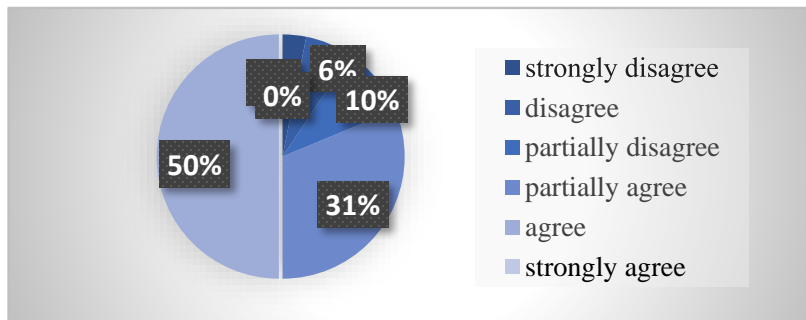
For the data analysis presented in Table 1, it must be clarified that the 6-point Likert scale can be reduced to 3 or 5 points. What stands out is that among the points there is an almost extreme distribution among 3 points of agreement (*Partially agree, agree, and strongly agree*) and 3 points of disagreement (*Strongly disagree, disagree, and partially disagree*). This becomes even clearer if the 6-point Likert scale is converted into scores (1-6 scores) to see the difference between the lowest points and the highest points. The analysis continues, focusing more on the last 3-point Likert scale, which present the agreement of our respondents regarding the 10 statements in Table 1.

Statement 1. The number of divorces is increasing in our community. Through this statement, the evaluation and attitude of our respondents toward divorce as a social phenomenon, as well as their concept of parental divorce in today's modern world, are measured. Although a special law regulates parental divorce, several problems and negative attitudes are still observed in both parents, which negatively impact and hinder the child's healthy growth.

Figure 2 illustrates those 25 respondents representing 50% of the respondents strongly agree that divorce is a phenomenon present in our community and that the number of children with divorced parents in preschool institutions has increased; 15 respondents representing 31%, indicate agree, to the statement and six respondents representing 10% indicate partially agree; while the rest 3+1+0=4 respondents representing 9% show partially disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree.

Figure 2

Respondents' Opinion on the Increase in Divorce Rates



Thus, according to the data in Figure 2, most respondents agree with the statement and maintain a moderate attitude, while the rest seem to have a wavering attitude from their opinions, mindsets, and prejudices.

Statement 2. Preschool children with divorced parents are treated fairly in our institution. This statement is intended to measure the respondents' opinion regarding the quality of the work done with children in our preschool institutions.

Figure 3

Support of Children with Divorced Parents in the Institution

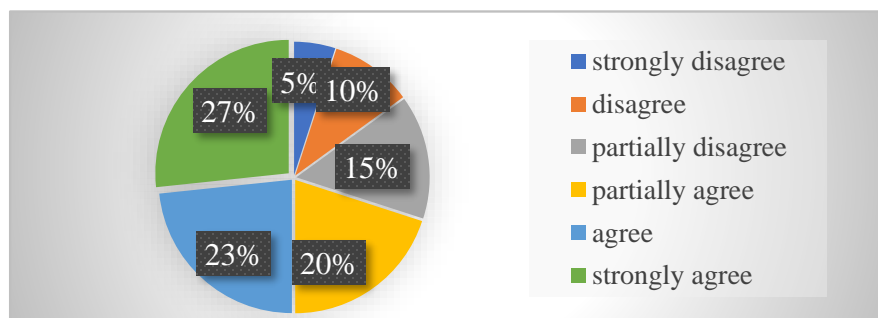


Figure 3 illustrates a mixture of respondents' answers. Thus, the number of respondents who strongly disagree, are 2 (5%), those who disagree, are 5 (10%), and those who partially disagree, are 7 (15%). While the rest, 70% of respondents (10+12+14=36 respondents) answered positively: 20% partially agree, 23% agree and 27%, strongly agree. This means that in recent years special attention and care have been given to children of divorced parents.

Statement 3. Divorce of parents has an impact on the development of preschool children. This statement is designed to collect data on how parental divorce affects the development of children.

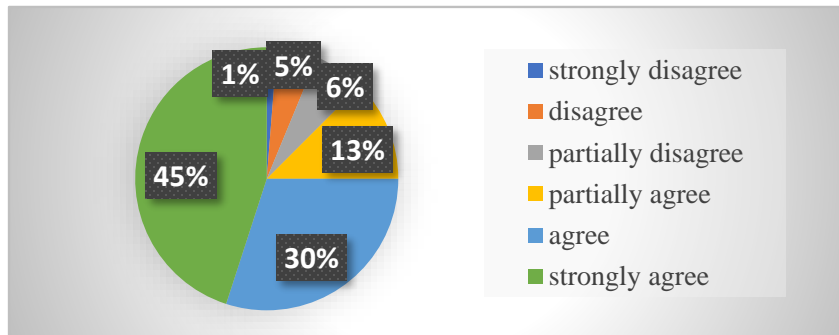
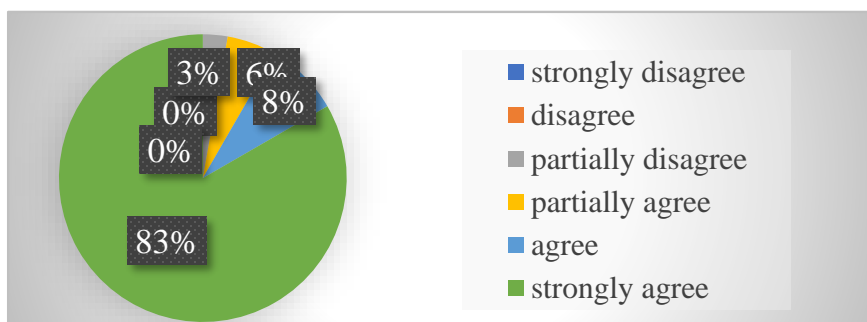
Figure 4*The Impact of Divorce on the Development of Preschool Children*

Figure 4 shows the following results: 22 respondents (45%), strongly agree with the statement above, 15 respondents (30%), agree and seven respondents (13%), partially agree, while three respondents (12%) support the negative statements (6% “partially disagree, 5% disagree and 1%, strongly disagree. Based on the statements above, it can be concluded that majority of the respondents were aware and understood that parental divorce has a negative impact on the development of preschool children if they do not receive appropriate attention and care. However, the rest of them still do not properly understand the negative effects of parental divorce on the development of preschool children. *Statement 4. Children of divorced parents experience anxiety during the period of parental divorce.* This statement is developed to collect the data on the psychological impact of parental divorce on children.

Figure 5*Children of Divorced Parents Experience Anxiety*

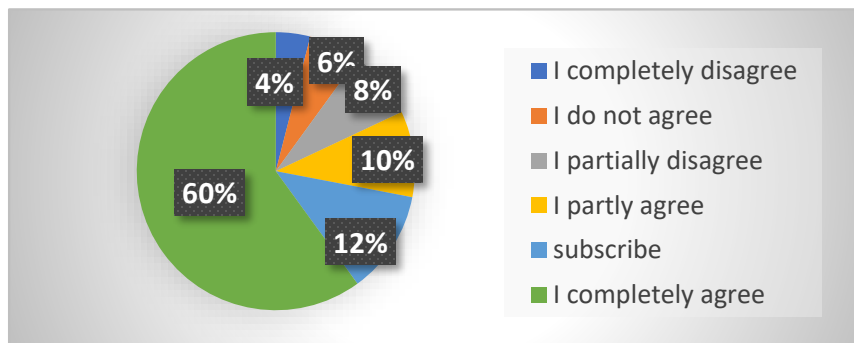
As shown in Figure 5, no respondent answered with strongly disagree, and “disagree. Only 3% of respondents answered with partially disagree. Regarding positive answers, three respondents (6%)

answered with partially agree, four respondents (8%) answered with agree, and 42 respondents (83%) answered with strongly agree. This indicates that the majority of our respondents agree that parental divorce negatively affects the child's psychological well-being. Everything depends on the nature of the child and the type of relationship the child has established with each parent.

Statement 5. *The emotional distress experienced by children of divorced parents during the divorce affects their behavior in the preschool institution.* This statement is developed to collect the data on negative impact of parental divorce on children's behavior both inside and outside of the preschool institution.

Figure 6

The Impact of Divorce on the Behavior of Children in the Institution During the Period of the Parents' Divorce

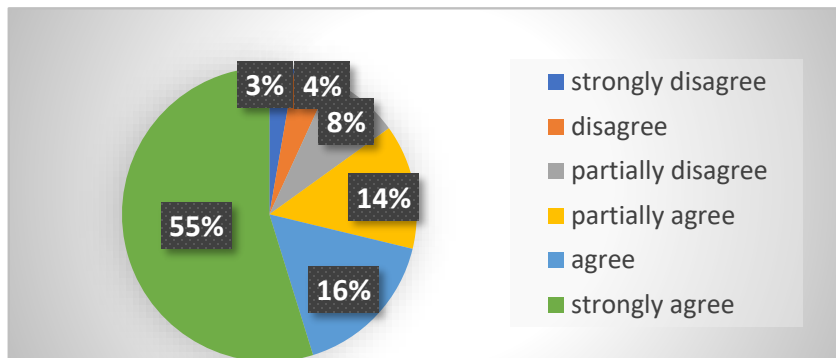


As Figure 6 shows, out of 50 respondents 4% of the respondents select the strongly disagree option, 6% disagree, and 8% partially disagree. Regarding positive answers, five respondents (10%) select the partially agree option, six (12%) agree, and 30 (60%) strongly agree. This means that the respondents answers reflect their agreement with the statement claiming that parental divorce "kills" children spiritually and can cause emotional outbursts and several abnormal behaviors.

Statement 6. *Divorce of parents has a negative effect on the child's learning performance.* This statement is developed to collect the data on how parental divorce affects the child's active participation in educational activities and their learning performance.

Figure 7

Parents' Divorce Affects the Child's Learning Performance



As shown in Figure 7, most of our respondents respectively, 85% (7+8+27=42) of them, answered with partially agree, agree, and strongly agree, while 15% (2+2+4 =8) answered with strongly disagree, disagree and partially disagree. This means that parental divorce negatively affects learning performance, as children are inattentive, have no interest in learning activities, do not feel satisfaction from going to school/kindergarten, make little effort to learn, etc.

Statement 7. *The institution and the kindergarten teacher are informed about the divorce of child's parents.* This statement collects data that help the child get over parental divorce as easily as possible, coordinating the educational work with the institution that the child attends.

Figure 8

The Information of the Institution About Divorce

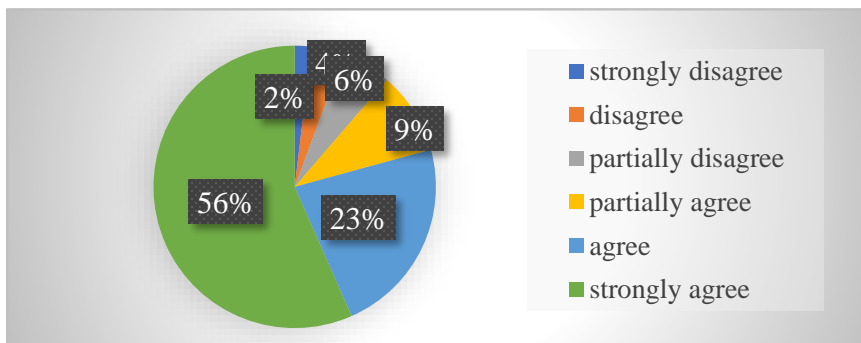
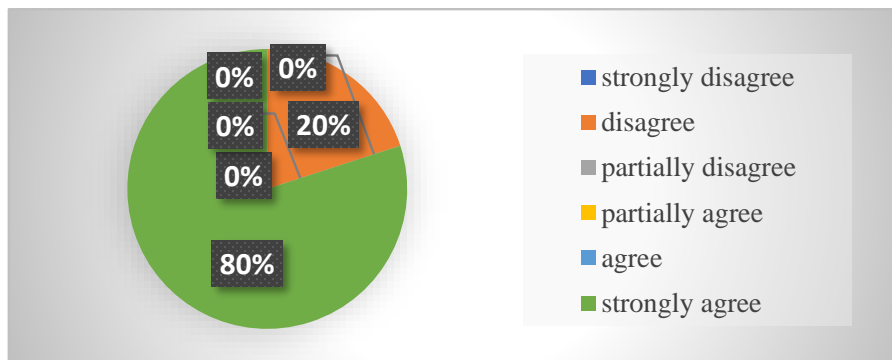


Figure 8 shows that 88% (5+11+28=44) of respondents strongly agree, with the statement above, while 12% (1+2+3=6) of respondents, do not agree, with the statement above. Hence, most of our respondents, parents, and kindergarten teachers think that the preschool institution that the child

attends should be notified of the event in the child's family. It is important to provide support to the child by coordinating the efforts of both parents and kindergarten teachers in order to help the child navigate through parental divorce as smoothly as possible. *Statement 8. Timely information about the divorce helps in getting through the emotional state as smoothly as possible.* This statement is developed to collect the data regarding the importance of timely information for the coordination of work to cope with cases of strong emotional experiences and avoid psychological trauma in children.

Figure 9

Parents Inform the Institution About Their Divorce in Time

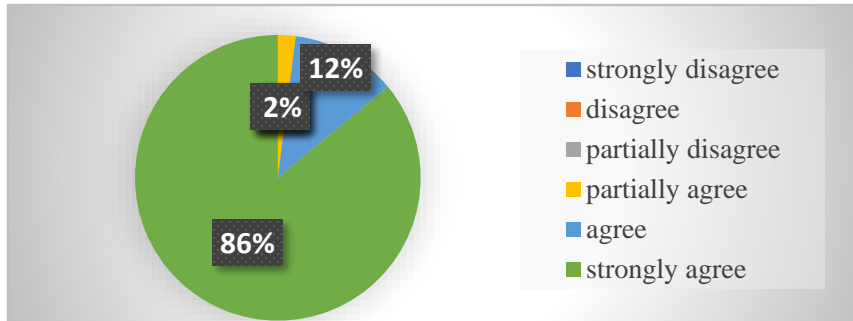


As for Figure 9, respondents support the two positive answers, strongly agree, (40 respondents or 80%) and agree (10 respondents or 20%). This means that the child needs support to cope with parental divorce, which should be provided as early as possible. This fact becomes even more important when children have a hard time with parental divorce and when they risk being killed spiritually or going into serious mental states, such as depression or psychological trauma.

Statement 9. Divorced parents seek cooperation with the institution so the child can get through the divorce as easily as possible. This statement collects data regarding the professional help that the institution and kindergarten teachers can provide to both parents to make life easier for the child so that he can adapt and lead a normal life.

Figure 10

Divorced Parents Seek Cooperation with the Institution

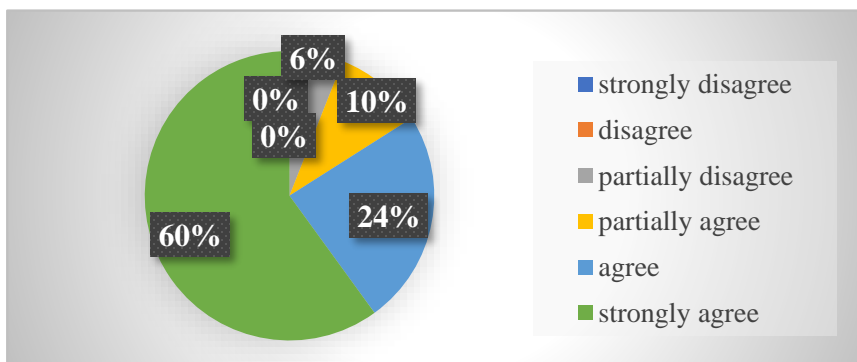


As it is shown from the above chart (Figure 10), 43 respondents (86%) strongly agree with the statement, six respondents (12%) agree, and only 1 respondent (2%) partially agrees. No respondents support the negative answers. These data clearly show that even the parents themselves feel it necessary to communicate with the institution their child attends and that this trust is growing.

Statement 10. *Institution - Parents cooperation positively affects getting through the emotional state as easily as possible.* This statement collects data regarding the importance of the cooperation of preschool institutions with divorced parents.

Figure 11

Institution-Parent Cooperation has a Positive Effect on Child's Emotional State



According to the data in Figure 11, 30 respondents (60%) answered with strongly agree, 12 respondents (24%) agree and five respondents (10%) with partially agree, while 6% (3 +0=3) of respondents do not agree and partially agree with the statement. This indicates that the study

respondents understand the importance of cooperation and ongoing communication among all parties involved. Kindergarten teachers who work in kindergartens or school institutions are trained to establish a positive, supportive environment for children. Likewise, they can positively affect both parents of the children they work with.

Discussion

In this section, the current study's findings are combined with today's concept of parental divorce. These also have their uniqueness, as explained below:

1. In recent years, there has been a noticeable rise in the number of parental divorces. This phenomenon has been documented by numerous researchers across the developed world and our study findings on preschool institutions of the municipality of Gjilan in Kosovo has confirmed this trend. The increase in parental divorces is primarily attributed to the dysfunctional families. If a family is not functioning properly, the marriage dissolution (divorce) may be the necessary solution.
2. In a social context, we have observed that the concept of parental divorce has been correctly understood by the majority of our respondents, with over 80% of them, demonstrating clear comprehension. However, the remaining minority exhibit several issues related to their attitude toward the child, each other, and themselves. It is crucial to highlight that these attitudes are accompanied by many prejudicial concepts and conservative mindsets that do not discourage divorce, maintaining excessively harsh and hostile attitudes of the partners toward each other, or promote the idea of sole parental responsibility.
3. Divorce is legally recognized and regulated in Kosovo. However, complications arise when children are involved, particularly when one parent is granted custody following the divorce. In these cases, the strongest disagreements between the former partners often arise, creating an unhealthy environment for the child's healthy growth and development. Based on the data analysis, it can be concluded that many divorced parents fail to comprehend the emotional impact that conflicts, abuse, insults, and violence within a family environment can have on their children's well-being and future. While numerous studies have shown that parental divorce has negative effects on the children, some research has suggested that it can create a healthier living environment, leading to positive outcomes. This supports Hypothesis 1 that in our social reality, "The psychological effects of parental divorce on the behavior of preschool children are not sufficiently recognized by parents."
4. In recent decades, children have become more vulnerable to family problems and parental divorce. Studies show that these problems are often linked to changes in family dynamics and the evolving nature of modern

society. Divorce can cause emotional upheaval for the entire family, but it is especially difficult for children, who may feel scared, confused, and frustrated.

Data reveal that in our reality, many children struggle to cope with parental divorce, experiencing feelings of uncertainty, stress, anxiety, depression, or even psychological trauma, which can hinder their growth and development. Moreover, in our social reality, parents' separation is a challenging event that can have negative effects on a child's behavior, academic performance, and mental health.

5. The collaboration between parents and kindergarten teachers in the preschool institutions has shown positive progress. While psychosocial support for children with divorced parents has been initiated, it still falls short of the standards expected in a civilized society. The role of kindergarten teachers and peers in the school community is to provide psychological support to help children navigate through the parental divorce with as little difficulty as possible. The study's findings revealed that in the preschool institutions of the municipality of Gjilan, the majority of the parents inform their children's kindergarten teachers about their divorce.

While many parents do inform kindergarten teachers about the child's mental state during and after a divorce, there are still some parents who do not acknowledge or accept the children's reactions to the situation. It is important to recognize that the consequences of divorce can have long-term effects on children's behaviors in the following years. This supports our Hypothesis 2 "Effective parent-kindergarten teacher cooperation positively affects getting through the parental divorce event as easily as possible."

In the developed world, there are various programs and resources available for parents to help mitigate the psychological effects of divorce on their preschool-aged children. These programs offer parent education and teach co-parenting skills and strategies to help children cope with the psychological effects of divorce as well as provide access to professional support. 6. Our data show that the impact of parental divorce becomes more evident when children experience anxiety or psychological trauma. Therefore, it is crucial to maintain healthy parent-child relationships both before and after divorce to avoid mental health problems affecting children's behaviors. Mental health specialists suggest that parents provide a safe and peaceful living space for their children, refraining from involving them in their disagreements. These measures can significantly reduce or limit the psychological trauma children experience. A well-known psychotherapist, Amy Morin, LCSW (2022), points out that children who doubt their ability to cope with change and those who

see themselves as helpless victims are more likely to experience mental health problems. Teach your child that even though divorce is difficult to deal with, they should find the mental strength to handle it; seek continuous education of parents and others, she advises. (Tsai, etj., 2022)

Stress and anxiety disorders, as well as psychological depression and trauma, can lead to behavioral problems in children. Therefore, it's important to have your child thoroughly evaluated by a professional to determine if your child has abnormal mental health conditions. A professional will make recommendations and may refer your child for psychological services such as professional counseling or various psychological therapies. Timely evaluation and treatment can lead to major improvements in behavior.

Conclusion

The topic of parental divorce and its impact on the psychology of preschool children is a broad and rather delicate subject that affects us all. It has significant implications for the behavior of preschool children and can potentially lead to mental health disorders in adulthood. Wanting to contribute through our elaborations above, for ongoing work, it is suggested:

First, this study should be supplemented with further research, involving a larger population and a wider territorial scope. Likewise, more focused research could be conducted to examine the attitudes and treatment of children in families experiencing parental divorce, based on the gender of the parents involved.

Second, it is crucial to conduct further research that examines the psychological effects of parental divorce at different stages of life. For example, studies could explore the effects of divorce on the behavior of teenagers or the mental health of older individuals. By delving deeper into such topics, researchers can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the long-term effects of parental divorce on individuals at various stages of life.

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