

A Study of Mental Health of Divorcee Mothers

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ABSTRACT: Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. The purpose of present study is to find out the impact of divorce on the mental health of divorcee mothers. A sample of 80 mothers was selected randomly age ranging from 30 to 40 years. This sample was divided into two groups i.e. control group consists of non-divorcee mothers (N= 40) and other one is experimental group consists of divorcee mothers (N=40). For data collection, the mental health battery developed by Arun Kumar Singh and Alpana Sen Gupta (2000) was used. Statistical techniques i.e. Mean, SD and T- Test were used for analysis of the data. The result reveals that the overall mental health of divorcee mothers was found poorer as compared to non-divorcee mothers. The mental health of working divorcee mothers was found better as compared to the non-working divorcee mothers. Findings imply that mental health enhancement programs should be launched by such organizations working for well-being and empowerment of women.

Key Words: Mental health, Divorce.

I. INTRODUCTION

Mental health is a level of psychological well-being, or an absence of mental illness. It is the "psychological state of someone who is functioning at a satisfactory level of emotional and behavioral adjustment". From the perspective of positive psychology or holism, mental health may include an individual's ability to enjoy life, and create a balance between life activities and efforts to achieve psychological resilience.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2014), mental health includes "subjective well-being, perceived self-efficacy, autonomy, competence, inter-generational dependence, and self-actualization of one's intellectual and emotional potential, among others." The WHO further states that the well-being of an individual is encompassed in the realization of their abilities, coping with normal stresses of life, productive work and contribution to their community (WHO, 2014).

Good mental health is a sense of wellbeing, confidence and self-esteem. It enables us to fully enjoy and appreciate other people, day-to-day life and our environment. When we are mentally healthy we can: form positive relationships, use our abilities to reach our potential, deal with life's challenges.

Divorce is a legal action between married people to terminate their marriage relationship. It can be referred to as dissolution of marriage and is basically, the legal action that ends the marriage before the death of either spouse. The dissolution of a marriage is almost always an unhappy event, at the very least marked by disappointment and the loss of dreams and expectations. In addition, there are usually many legal, financial, parental, emotional, and practical aspects that require changes in responsibilities and routines, and it can take people years to regain equilibrium. Nevertheless, divorce serves an important function in legally and emotionally freeing people to form a more stable relationship.

In the United States, researchers estimate that 40%–50% of all first marriages, and 60% of second marriages, will end in divorce. There are some well known factors that put people at higher risk for divorce: marrying at a very early age, less education and income, living together before marriage, a premarital pregnancy, no religious affiliation, coming from a divorced family, and feelings of insecurity. The most common reasons people give for their divorce are lack of commitment, too much arguing, infidelity, marrying too young, unrealistic expectations, lack of equality in the relationship, lack of preparation for marriage, and abuse.

The divorce rate in India is increasing among the young married couples, according to a report in Hindustan times. These are some facts about the increasing divorce rate in India. 1,667 cases of divorce were filed in Mumbai in 2014 till November 30, up from 5245 cases in 2010 (Hindustan times January 5, 2015).

Psychological and Emotional Aspects of Divorce

Corcoran (1997) found some physical and emotional problems that are more common among divorced individuals compared to married individuals.

Happiness: Divorced adults are generally less happy.

Depression: Divorced individuals, particularly women, are more vulnerable to depression. They have higher levels of psychological stress, lower levels of general psychological well-being, and poorer self-esteem.

Health: Divorced individuals see a doctor more often and are more likely to suffer from serious illnesses. Some of these health problems diminish over time. But individuals who experience a divorce are more likely to die at earlier ages.

Alcohol/Drugs: Divorced adults drink more alcohol than married adults and account for the highest proportion of heavy drinkers.

The decision to divorce can bring about major changes in the social lives of individuals. Compared with married individuals, divorced individuals are less involved in social activities and report more social isolation. Being involved socially is often difficult because accomplishing the day-to-day activities of home, work, and childcare is often more difficult to do alone. Divorced adults often face greater loneliness than married individuals. In addition to losing a spouse, they also lose many of their social contacts such as in-laws, married friends, and neighbors. The loss of these social contacts often results in the loss of emotional support. Researchers at the University of Chicago also found that divorcees were 23 per cent more likely to experience sleep disturbance and mobility problems.

II. OBJECTIVE:

- ❖ To study the mental health of divorcee mothers.
- ❖ To compare the mental health of divorcee mothers and non divorcee mothers.
- ❖ To compare the mental health of working and non working divorcee mothers.

III. METHODOLOGY

Sample: A sample of 80 mothers was selected randomly age ranging from 30 to 40 years from Udaipur City of Rajasthan. This sample was divided into two groups i.e. control group consists of non divorcee mothers (N= 40) and other one is experimental group consists of divorcee mothers (N=40). Out of these 40 divorcee mothers, 20 were working and remaining 20 were non working women.

Variables:

Independent Variable

- (A) Type of Mothers
 - i. Divorcee Mothers
 - ii. Non divorcee Mothers
- (B) Working Status of divorcee mothers
 - i. Working
 - ii. Non Working

Dependent variable

- ❖ Mental Health

Research Design: A 2×2 factorial design was formulated as per the objectives of the study.

Materials: The mental health battery, developed by Arun Kumar Singh and Alpana Sen Gupta (2000) was used. This battery contains 130 items categorized into six sub tests with two alternative answers i.e. 'Yes' and 'No'. It measures six dimensions of mental health namely; emotional stability, overall adjustment, autonomy, security insecurity, self concept and intelligence. Test- retest reliability of different sub tests is ranging from .76- .87.

IV. PROCEDURE

Mental health battery was conducted individually on divorcee and non divorcee mothers. Firstly the instructions related to battery were given to them. After that mental health battery was given and asked to start the work as per the instructions. When the subject finished the work, test batteries were collected from them and scored according to the manual.

The scores obtained were analyzed statistically. Mean, Standard deviation and t-value were calculated to see the effect of independent variables on dependent variables.

V. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Means, Standard deviations and t-value of Divorcee & non divorcee mothers in respect to mental health.

Type of mothers	Mean	SD	t-Value
Divorcee	83.125	68.26	8.81*
Non Divorcee	98.575	54.71	

*Significant at .01

Table 2: Means, Standard deviations and t-value of working divorcee & non working divorcee mothers.

Working Status	Mean	SD	t-Value
Working	104.1	19.67	7.12*
Non Working	93.05	28.36	

*Significant at .01

Result table 1 shows that the mean score of divorcee and non divorcee mothers are 83.125 & 98.575 respectively. The t-value for these mean scores was found to be 8.81, which is significant at .01 levels. It's clear from the significant difference between mean scores of divorcee and non divorcee mothers that divorcee mothers possess poor mental health as compared to non divorcee mothers.

The reasons of poor mental health among divorcee mothers may be due to relationship separation, work family conflict, current economic pressure, cultural attitudes towards divorce, and even suicidal thoughts in divorced mothers. The higher levels of psychological distress and psychiatric morbidity experienced by divorcee mothers are more strongly related to the greater exposure of these women to stress and strain than to deficits in social competence or personal resilience (Avison, W.R. 2015). Studies have also shown elevated levels of common mental disorders among divorcee mothers compared with non divorcee mothers. The review by Mooney et al. (2009) highlights the impact of divorce on the mental health of mothers, particularly an increase in depression. Compared to non divorcee mothers, divorcee mothers were more likely to have suffered an episode of depression, higher levels of chronic stress, more recent life events and a greater number of childhood adversities. Divorcee mothers also reported lower levels of perceived social support, social involvement and frequency of contact with friends and family than non divorcee mothers (Brewer & Nandi, 2014). The results of the multivariate analyses showed that, together, stress and social support accounted for almost 40% of the relationship between divorcee- parent status and depression. (Cairney and Boyle, 2003)

Result table 2 indicates that the mean scores of working divorcee and non working divorcee mothers are 104.1 and 93.05 respectively. The t-value was found to be 7.12, which is significant at .01 levels. This significant difference between the mean scores clearly states that working divorcee mothers possess better mental health as compared to non working divorcee mothers.

The working mothers had better mental health and reported less depression than the non-working mothers. The most frequently reported source of stress for working mothers was not having enough time to do everything, whereas for non-working mothers lack of social life was a major stressor. The findings of the study (Routet et al., 2016) support the expansion hypothesis, which emphasizes the benefits rather than the costs of multiple role involvement. The risk of mental health problems is especially pronounced among poor divorcee mothers. Economic disadvantage increases exposure to stress and strain, threatens one's sense of self and can ultimately manifest itself in mental health problems.

A study on "working mothers and stress" reveals increasing number of women nowadays are faced with the task of juggling the roles of mother and employees. Whilst some studies report that working mother experienced high level of stress as compared mother. Others conclude that mothers who partake in paid employment benefit greatly for a number of different reasons. (Falzon, 2007)

VI. CONCLUSIONS

From the above results, it can be concluded that divorcee mothers has poor mental health as compared to non divorcee mothers. The condition is more critical in case of non working divorcee mothers. Non working divorcee mothers have found to be more poor mental health as compared to working divorcee mothers.

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