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Statistical Investigation of Early Divorce in Al-Aflaj Governorate, Saudi Arabia

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Abstract: In Al-Aflaj governorate, divorce and separation are perceived to be relatively rare events and available data on the subject has been described as "quantitative gossip". Although quantitative data are limited, there is rich multi-disciplinary literature on various aspects of marital stability in Saudi Arabia. This paper draws on this literature to first contextualize the key aspects of mariage and the socio-cultural as well as to diagnose the problem of early termination of marital status in Al-Aflaj governorate. Following this, the paper presents estimates of prevalence, trends and variations in divorce and separation using a sample of (53) cases of divorce randomly from beneficiaries of the Family Development Association in the province of Al-Aflaj because they include the representation element; and largely reflect the characteristics of cultural, social and economic reasons for divorce. It also, investigates the impact of cultural, economic and social changes on durability of marital stability in Al-Aflaj governorate. The findings revealed an upward trend and significant variations by cultural, economic and social reasons in divorce and separation in Al-Aflaj province. In addition, The results show the lack of dialogue and understanding between the spouses, addiction and the ill treatment of one spouse to the other. Moreover, there were statistically significant differences between males and females views on social and economic reasons.

Keywords: Divorce, economic reasons; social reasons; culture reasons; Al-Aflaj governorate.

1 Introduction

Divorce used to be a word that traumatized families and friends; but it has become familiar and common. In the past, both couples used to do several trials in order not to break up. However, they never do so such trial nowadays. Interviewing many people indicated different reasons behind the rise of this disturbing phenomenon.

In Saudi Arabia, i.e. the spatial limitation of the paper, marriage is restricted to potential spouses from the same tribe. But, some of these restrictions vary in different regions of the country. In the central part of the country, for example, these restrictions are more observed while they are less observed in the western region, including Meccah and Jeddah. In Saudi Arabia, the husband, according to Islamic teachings, is in charge of his family and must be the one who takes over the family financial burdens even if his wife is employed or rich.

Divorce rate in Saudi Arabia is increasing. The total number of registered divorce cases in the Kingdom was 17,528 cases in 1998. It represents 23% of the total marriages in the same year. This percentage was 22% in 1989. The national rate of divorce was about 1.35% in 1999. The main causes of divorce according to Al-Saif (1997), are women's employment, polygamy, family pressures, family interference, and sexual maladjustment. A study conducted by The Ministry of Planning in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (2003) demonstrated that divorce rate increased from 25% to 60% throughout the last twenty years. The study showed that the courts have registered more than (70) thousand marriage contracts and (13) thousand divorce cases, in one year. No quantitative study addressed divorce in Al-Aflaj province. The presumed rarity of divorce in Al-Aflaj governorate and lack of appropriate data reveal that marital dissolution has not received much attention.

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The present paper presents a framework that addresses and analyzes the problem of early divorce in Al-Aflaj governorate. Furthermore, it attempts to identify the real reasons for this problem according to the perception of both males and females in Al-Aflaj region and to solve or to reduce the severity of this problem after addressing the valuable suggestions based on the results.

2 Literature Review

Divorce threatens the community stability and progress. It negatively affects the community because children will live with one parent. Thus, they are liable to deviations, especially if they find no compensation for mother's passion or father's care. Children's success is totally based on family stability.

In many parts of Asia, early divorce has become increasingly common. In most countries of East Asia, divorce rates briefly reached as high as the levels seen in Westren Asia (Dommaraju & Jones 2011). In China where marriage rates have not declined to the levels observed in other East Asian countries, divorce rates have tripled or quadrupled over the last two decades (Lu & Wang 2014). The major exception to this trend in Asia is South Asia where marriage continues to be nearly universal and relatively early, and divorce is relatively uncommon. In India, though there have been changes in numerous aspects of marriage system including marriage age and spouse selection (Bose & South 2003; Desai & Andrist 2010; Allendorf 2013; Andrist, Banerji & Desai 2013; Prakash & Singh 2013; Dommaraju 2016), these have not radically transformed the institution of marriage.

Recently, early divorce has become increasingly in most of the Arab countries. In 2017, divorce rate in Egypt was 60.7% (Shawky 2017). In Kuwait, it was 33%, while it was 35% in Bahrain and 23% in Qatar (Abdulla, 2012). Since the objective of the present study is to identify the most important cultural, social and economic reasons that lead to the occurrence of early divorce in Aflaj province and methods of treatment, ished light on the pieces of literature that covered divorce. Several studies have been conducted on Saudi Arabia with an aim to know the perception of divorced men and women regarding their problems. Moreover, the problem of early divorce has associated with the demographic variables of age, cultural, educational, social and economic conditions of the country (Cole, 1973, Al-Khariji, 1983, Al-Hazani, 1986, Al-Badran & Rwished 1989, Al-Masaad 1995, Bakadir 1998, Al-Aqeel 2005, Alquzami 2005, Al-Kateeb 2009).

3 Marriage and divorce in Saudi Arabia

With regards to endogamy in the traditional family, marriage was restricted to potential spouses from the same tribe. However, some of these restrictions vary in different regions of the country. In the central part of the country, for example, these restrictions are more observed while they are less observed in the western region, including Meccah and Jeddah. Concerning exogamy, the dominant marriage pattern is among first cousins, primarily to the sons and daughters of the father's brothers. Marriage with the sons and daughters of mother's sisters and brothers ranked second. Now, it is the opposite. The main reason for this new trend is the increasing influence of mothers' selection for their son's wives (Al-Saif, 1997).

However, young and educated people tend to select their wives from different tribes, groups and clans. The groom or his family should present a dowry (bride-price), in the form of jewelry or any valuable thing, to the bride. This is obligatory duty for the groom or his family according to Islamic teachings. No marriage would be considered legal without this dowry, regardless of its value. The husband, according to Islamic teachings, is in charge of his family and must take over the family financial burdens even if his wife is employed or rich. For Muslims, Sharia remains largely uncodified irrelevant.

The basic tenet underlying Islamic law in Saudi Arabia is that marriage is a contract taht can be terminated if it is invalid. Repudiation of the marriage by a husband pronouncing (in oral or written form) talaq ("I divorce you") three times, for any or no cause, in the presence or absence of his wife, is binding. The wife can repudiate marriage only if the husband grants her the power to do so or if she has negotiated to have such powers in the marriage contract. Wives and husband can initiate divorce through mutual consent known as Khul (or Khula). Wives can also seek divorce known as faskh from a qazi (religious teacher) or third parties if there is no mutual consent.

4 Statement of the Problem

Divorce is one the most prevalent problems that extensively threatens family and social construction. A comparison of marriage contracts and divorce cases in Aflaj governorate shows that more than one-third of marriages end with divorce at the governorate level. For example, marriage contracts registered in 2016 at the Aflaj court amounted to about 408



(equivalent to 5.2 contracts per thousand (1000) residents), while divorce rates in the same year reached (123), equivalent to (1.6) divorce cases per thousand (1000) inhabitants of the population, i.e. more than one third of marriages ends in divorce. The following table shows the high rate of divorce in Aflaj governorate compared to population and number of marriage contracts:

	50		,			
Indicator	Year					
	2015	2016	2017			
Population	77000	79000	81000			
Number of marriage contracts	408	416	323			
Number of divorce contracts	9	123	109			
Marriage rate (per 1000 residents)	5.4	5.2	4.0			
Divorce rate (per 1000 residents)	0.11	1.6	1.4			

Table 1: The social characteristics of Aflaj governorate (2015-2017):

Accordingly, cultural, social and economic causes have played an important role in increasing divorce rate in Aflaj governorate. Moreover, in Arab countries, divorce is a right practiced by men and actually falls on women; women take the bulk of the analysis in exchange for the first party to equal divorce. Therefore, the study focuses not only on the divorced woman, but also on studying the relationship between the two extremes (divorced woman and man) and analyzing them in order to define the real reasons for the increase of the divorce rate in the Al-Aflaj province in the past two years.

5 Method

This study adopts the analytical descriptive methods to analyze the dataof the participants. It aims to identify the most important cultural, social and economic reasons for early divorce in Aflaj province and methods of treatment according to the personal experiences of divorced men and women in each item and construct.

Concepts

The study tool is applied in its final form to the sample. The response rate was approximately 100%. The percentage of the divorces among the age group less than or equal (20) years was about 3.8% in the sample, while the proportion of divorces among the age group above (20) years was 96.2%. Most participants had a degree.

5.1 Data Collection

Tool

The tool is a well-designed and organized questionnaire to collect the data about the most important cultural, social and economic reasons for early divorce in Aflaj province. The following steps have been considered while building this tool :a) The constructs of the questionnaire have been specified in the light of cultural, social and economic reasons, b) Several vocabulary, which may represent the major reasons for early divorce after exploring some books and pieces of literature relevant under current study, c) The instructions have been clearly written in the questionnaire to clarify the questions to the participants. Our questionnaire is consists of the following constructs with a number of items mentioned below: 1) Cultural reasons: involving (12) items. 2) social reasons: involving (7) items. 3) economic reasons: involving (10) items. 4) martial Relations reasons: involving (18) items.

5.2 Data Analysis

Stability and Reliability

Stability and reliability of our proposed constructs and items have been ensured using the coefficients of Cronbach's Alpha to confirm the overall goodness of the structure of our proposed questionnaire and its contents. The results show that the coefficient shows a value of 0.760, i.e. it is near to one. Hence, the consistency and reliability of questionnaire may be claimed as excellent and we can also claim that validity coefficient of 0.872 reflects the highest degree of accuracy of paragraphs (constructs and individual items in each construct) designed to evaluate the major reasons for early divorce in



Al-Aflaj governorate.

Description of Collected Sample Responses

The finalized version of questionnaire after peer-review has been distributed to the participants. The survey, which covered (53) divorced persons, collected data from the Family Development Association in the province of Al-Aflaj because they include the representation element and reflect the cultural, social and economic reasons for divorce in Al-Aflaj governorate. The analysis is restricted to divorces cases between 2015 and 2017. We analyze data of the persons separated for less than 3 years. Those who report their current marital status as divorced, deserted or separated for less than or three years are combined into a single category. The survey also collected information on characteristics of the participants. The article involves information on educational attainment, marital status, age, level of education, type of job, income rate and area of residence. The analyses are based on women and husband who were divorced. This means that those who were divorced or separated previously but had remarried by the time of the survey would not be counted as divorced or separated. The sample characteristics for variables used in the analyses are presented in Table 2. The table shows the percentage of those who are divorced. The analysis is based on 53 divorced persons. To facilitate the interpretation of the results, authors adopted the Triple Likert Scale to define the level of response to the tool items. Weight of the substitutes (agree= 1, somewhat agree = 2, not agree = 3).

Table 2: Sample characteristics, percent or mean, Al-Aflaj (2015-2017):

reiteint									
Response rate Age			Education level						
Women Men		\leq 20years	> 20years	Illiterate	Primary	Middle	High	University	Postgraduate
75	25	3.8	96.2	3.8	17	13.2	20.8	43.4	1.9
Note. Primary = Primary school, Middle= Prep school and High=High School.									

6 Results and Discussion

6.1 Descriptive findings

The present study aims to describe and analyze the cultural, social and economic reasons as well as the reasons related to the special relationship between the spouses, which cause early divorces in the Al-Aflaj governorate. It also attempts to identify the possible solutions that reduce divorce occurrence. The weighted mean (the arithmetic mean) of the sample responses is estimated in order to identify the direction of the sample views (divorced women and men). Table (3) shows the arithmetic mean and the standard deviation of the responses to the questions presented in the four axes.

· · ·										
			Male		Female					
CONST	Cultural	Social	Economic	Martial relation	Cultural	Social	Economic	Martial relation		
Ν	12	12	12	12	41	41	41	41		
Mean	1.7222	1.8571	2.60250	1.7222	1.8919	1.7846	1.9707	1.8599		
STD	0.35056	0.23592	0.23789	0.25070	0.47221	0.52790	0.42086	0.42806		

Table 3: Gender-Wise Analysis of response on the constructs.

Note. CONST= construct, N = number and STD=standard devotion.

Weighted Average of Individual Items

The study is attempts to achieve its objectives through investigating the following questions: First Question: Are there cultural reasons for the early divorce in Al-Aflaj governorate from the participants' perspective? To test the response to this and question as well as the other questions, the study adopts SPSS18 to estimate the repetitions, percentages, arithmetic averages and standard deviations based on the 3-points Likert Scale responses for each item of the questions. The results are explained as follows:

The results of study sample are consistent with the construct related to the existence of cultural reasons cause early divorce in Al-Aflaj governorate as overall arithmetic mean of (1.85) exhibits a medium degree of acceptance of these reasons from the participants' perspective? The range of arithmetic means, for the degree of consistency of study sample



with the existence of cultural reasons, is between 1.64 and 2.38. The item "the difference in intellectual level between spouses is one of the causes of early divorce" shows the highest arithmetic mean of (1.38) because the difference in intellectual level between the spouses causes lack of understanding between them. In addition, the item "absence of the role of educational institutions towards the issue of divorce", comes in the second order of approval of the causes of early divorce with arithmetic mean of (1.64). Then, the item "lack of knowledge of marital rights of one spouse" comes in the third position with arithmetic mean of (1.66) because his/her knowledge of these rights greatly reduces marital problems and prevents the occurrence of early divorce.

Second Question: Are there social reasons for early divorce in Al-Aflaj governorate from the point of views/perception of study sample? Using the same approach, we get the results of study sample which are consistent with the construct related to the existence of social reasons, which lead to the early divorce in Al-Aflaj governorate as overall arithmetic mean of (1.80) shows a medium degree of acceptance of these reasons from the participants' perspective. The range of arithmetic means for the degree of consistency of study sample with the existence of social reasons is between 1.57 and 1.92. The item "The intervention of relatives in the affairs of spouses is one of the causes of early divorce" represents the highest arithmetic mean of (1.57) because the negative interference of relatives in the affairs aggravates marital problems and causes divorce.

Third Question: Are there economic reasons for early divorce in Al-Aflaj governorate from the participants' perspective? The results of the study are consistent with the construct related to the existence of economic reasons, which lead to early divorce in Al-Aflaj governorate as overall arithmetic mean (1.98) indicates a medium degree of acceptance of these reasons in the opinions of the participants. The range of arithmetic means, for the degree of consistency of study sample with the existence of economic reasons, is between 1.60 and 2.40. The item "the husband's failure to fulfill the needs of the family cause of early divorce" carries the highest arithmetic mean of (1.60) because the husband's failure to fulfill the needs of the family negatively affects the stability of marital life , aggravates the wife's debts and causes early divorce.

Fourth Question: Does the marital relation between the spouses cause early divorce in Al-Aflaj governorate from the point of views/perception of study sample? The results of study sample show that the sample of the study in a medium degree of acceptance on the construct of the special relationship between the spouses with a general arithmetic mean of (1.83). The range of arithmetic means, for the degree of consistency of study sample with the existence ofmarital relation between the spouses between 1.30 and 2.60. The item "the absence of dialogue and understanding between spouses is one of the reasons for early divorce" represents the highest arithmetic mean of (1.30) because dialogue and understanding between the spouses is an important factor in the stability of marital life. On the contrary, its absence leads to early divorce. Also, the item "drug addiction is one of the causes of early divorce", represents the arithmetic mean of (1.42) and comes in the second order of the approval of the causes of early divorce. Drug addiction also affects the economic and social status, as well as reputation of the family. Furthermore, item "one spouse's abuse of the other is a cause of early divorce" reflects the arithmetic mean of (1.43) and comes in the third position because mistreatment of one spouse undermines confidence between them and affects the emotional relationship, offends dignity and causes hatred as well as early divorce.

6.2 Correlation Coefficients among the Constructs of the Study

To find out how closely the study axes are connected to each other, Pearson's correlation coefficient is used to define these relationships. The results are shown in Table (4). It is noted from this table that the relations are statistically significant among most axes (less than or equal to 0.05). It is also noted that, the two axes (the social causes and the special relationship between the spouses) are the most related (correlation coefficient between them 0.625). This indicates that the reasons for divorce relating to the special relationship between spouses are closely related to social reasons, while the relationship between the two axes (cultural reasons and economic reasons) is less correlated (correlation coefficient 0.214). This shows that the cultural reasons are not linked to economic reasons.

Gender Wise Comparisons of Results

One of the hypotheses of this study is to investigate statistical differences between the responses of males and females regarding the problems of early divorces in Al-Aflaj governorate. We address this issue with the following question: Question: Is there any difference in males and females' responses to the questions related to the problems of early divorces in Al-Aflaj governorate? To investigate this question, independent samples Student's T-test has been applied to the means of males' and females' responses in each construct of the study (i.e. gender factor - male or female responses are same or different) and the results are presented in Table 5. The following hypothesis has been applied: Null Hypothesis: There is no difference in the average responses of males and females. Alternative Hypothesis: There is a difference in the average responses.

This table indicates that the moral probabilities of the T-test for the difference between the average (male and female) of the three axes: social reasons, economic reasons, and special relationship between the spouses are respectively (0.011),

Γ		Pearson's correlation coefficient					confidence interval				
Γ	CONST	Cultural	I Social Economic Martial relation			Cultural	Social	Economic	Martial relation		
	Cultural	1.0	0.598**	0.214	0.534**	0.0000	0.0000	0.1240	0.0000		
Γ	Social	0.598**	1.0	0.524**	0.625**	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000		
	Economic	0.214	0.524 * *	1.0	0.311*	0.1240	0.0000	0.0000	0.0230		
	Martial Relation	0.534**	0.625**	0.311*	1.0	0.000	0.0000	0.0230			

 Table 4: Pearson's correlation coefficient between constructs.

Note. ** means that the correlation has a statistical significance at 0.01 and * means that the correlation has a statistical significance at 0.05.

Table 5: T-test for Equality of Means

			Male		Female			
CONST	Cultural	Social	Economic	Martial relation	Cultural	Social	Economic	Martial relation
Ν	12	12	12	12	41	41	41	41
t	-1.152	0.461	0.425	-1.058	-1.355	0.679	0.571	-1.398
DM	-0.1697	-0.0726	0.05427	-0.13770	-0.1697	-0.0726	0.05427	-0.13770
DSTD	0.1473	0.1576	0.12759	0.13016	0.1252	0.1069	0.09506	0.09852
SIG	0.5010	0.0110	0.02300	0.0470	0.5010	0.0110	0.0230	0.0470

Note. CONST= construct, DM = Mean Difference, DSTD=standard devotion error Difference and SIG= Significance (2.talled).

(0.023), (0.047). Consequently, we reject the imposition of nullity (P), and accept the alternative hypothesis (P1), i.e there are statistically significant differences between the views of males and females on the social and economic reasons as well as the reasons mentioned in the special relationship between spouses. In the construct of social reasons there are statistically significant differences between males and females. The female's average perception of 1.857 is higher than that of male representing 1.785. This statistical result explains that males agree social reasons cause early divorce in Aflaj province. Concerning economic reasons, the differences were statistically significant for males, they obtained an average of 2.025, while the females obtained an average of 1.971. This statistical result explains that males believe more than females that the economic reasons mentioned in the study tool cause early divorce in the province of Aflaj. In terms of the special relationship between the spouses, the differences were statistically significant. Females' average perception was 1.860, while males obtained an average of (1.772). This statistical result explains that females believe higher than males that the special relationship between the spouses mentioned in the study tool causes early divorce in the province of Aflaj. As for the construct of cultural causes, the probability of the T-test for is 0.501, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, we will accept null hypothesis (P), which states that there are no statistically significant differences between the participants' cultural characteristics due to gender.

7 Conclusion and Recommendations

The present study quantified prevalence and variations in divorce in Al-Aflaj governorate. The numbers showed a rising trend of marital dissolution resulting from divorce in Al-Aflaj governorate. The overall level of marital dissolution, however, remained low. They revealed important differences in social, cultural, and economic. The findings also contribute to our understanding of the role of relation between spouses in marital stability. Accordingly, we define several recommendations, which will have an active and positive role in addressing the problem of early divorce in Al-Aflaj governorate, as follows: 1) The Ministry of Islamic Affairs guides preachers address danger of early divorce and its bad effects on the individual, family and society, 2) the competent parties such as family development associations, social development committees, neighbourhood centres, etc., should arrange awareness sessions for those who are on the point of getting married. They should cover the following domains: a) Marital rights and related provisions (financial rights - sexual rights) and others, b)good treatment and cohabitation, c) the art of dialogue between spouses, d) handling marital differences, e) managing financial affairs in the family and avoiding excess and negligence, 3) the Family Development Association in Al-Aflaj governorate shall link any support or assistance to successfully pass these courses, 4) there should be a special support for who have continued their marital life without any case of divorce, 5) financial support to needy families and charities should be in the form of direct expenditure, through a questionnaire to identify the needs of the family, 6) the Ministry of Justice in Saudi Arabia shall establish a method in which the judge shall act in cases of divorce, guaranteeing the non-interference of relatives in the matter of divorce, 7) in the case of a significant age difference between the spouses, the marriage contract shall be in court with the judge to verify the wife's consent and the absence of any pressure from the spouse, 8) putting a deterrent punishment for those who force the girl to marry to a man she never accepts, 9) etablishing offices for guidance and family guidance in the Ministry of Social Affairs in each city and governorate so that it can play its role in family counseling and can be linked electronically to the courts, 10) media bodies, through their audio and video programs, should spread awareness, educate and host experts as well as legal and family counselors to discuss the phenomenon of early divorce and how tohandle, 11) the educational bodies - especially the universities - must deliver a curriculum tackling the importance of marriage and the principles of selecting husband and wife, marital rights, and how to handle family problems, and 12) establishing a partnership between the courts on the one hand and the drug control or the Ministry of Health on the other hand to ensure safety of the spouses accused of taking drugs to prevent early divorce.

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