

ORIGINAL ARTICLE**The Influence of Parental Divorce on the Personality and Social Adjustment of Adolescent Students of Jimma, Agaro and Mizan Towns**Fitsume Berhanu¹

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Abstract

The Personality and social adjustment of adolescent students to parental divorce is the focus of this research. It questioned whether parental divorce influences the personality characters and social adjustment of adolescents. A cross-sectional, questionnaire-based survey was conducted on 120 purposely selected groups of adolescents (60 adolescents from divorced family and 60 from intact family), attending 10+1 & 10+2 grade level at Jimma, Agaro and Mizan town preparatory schools. Socio-demographic details and responses to questionnaires assessing the personality character and social adjustment of adolescents were recorded. The data was analyzed, and compared using statistical measures of correlation and independent sample t-test. The results indicated that high levels of excitability (M=4.32), boldness (M=3.82), withdrawal (M=3.66), apprehension (M=3.52), and tension (M=4.64), as well as low levels of emotional stability (M=2.06), warmth (M=2.43), self-discipline (M=2.38), and conformity (M=2.40) characterized the personality of adolescents from divorced family, and the result was significantly different ($t = 1.18, \alpha = 0.05$) as compared with the personality measures of adolescents of intact family. Moreover, adolescents from divorced family (M=3.05) performed poor in social adjustment, as compared to adolescents from intact family (M=3.18), ($t = -3.07, \alpha = 0.05$).

Key words: Adolescents/ Divorced family/ Intact family/ Personality/ Social Adjustment

1. Introduction

Perhaps the most common and potentially destructive crisis that many children and adolescents face is the divorce of their parents. Parents for one or another reason get divorced, but the often effect of the divorce on children has unquantifiable destruction in various aspects, economically, psychologically and socially. Today the social problems related to divorce and its psychological effects on children are becoming more extensive and pressing. The children, as much as or more than the parents, may feel pain, confusion, anger, hate, bitter disappointment, a sense of failure, and self doubt (Kelly & Lamb, 2003).

During adolescence, the personality development reaches a crisis point, and the development of a unique and stable personality is often a very difficult aspect to deal with for adolescents from disturbed or divorced family (Ryan & Deci, 2003).

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² The article can be cited this way.

Indeed, parents' involvement in the socialization process of adolescents in the family is vital to the psychological and social growth of the adolescents.

Although the effect of parental divorce on children development has been studied widely among western society (Arnold and Jensen, 1995), too little is known about the issue in Ethiopia. Though it may not be possible to give documented evidence from research outcomes, from the context of the social structure of Ethiopian society, one may understand that children of divorced parents can be victimized in their social and psychological development. Such complications may be introduced into their social relationship and personality characteristics. Gossip in all its poisonous forms is irritating and often is dangerous to children. For example, children raised in a single mother family may face direct problems which make them acutely aware of the fact that they are a child of a divorcee. They are called by common Amharic expression as "Yeset lij" (meaning, a child of a woman). This expression has negative and inferior connotations attributed to women.

A study conducted by Askalemariam and Minwagaw to investigate the perceived causes of divorce and its consequences in East Gojjam Zone, Amhara region, indicated that children from divorced families have been affected by psychological and social problems. The respondents of the study viewed that both children and adults in the divorced family develop anti-social behavior such as delinquent, crimes, theft, immoral acts of conduct, school dropout, addiction, pre-marital sex and psychological problems such as inferiority, stress, and depression. Moreover, children from single-parent faced loss of confidence and hope. The study concluded that living without mother in the house or father figure in the family can cause serious problems in all ages of children but particularly in adolescent. Physical and psychological abuse, poor performance in academic life, and dropout are few of the examples of negative effects of divorce (Askalemariam & Minwagaw, 2014).

Another study, conducted to describe the magnitude of specific mental and behavioral disorders in children in southern Ethiopia, showed that age and residence in urban areas are significant correlates of behavioral disorders in children. The study suggested further studies, using structured interview, in other population groups in the country (Ashenafi, Kebede, Desta & Alem, 2000).

Among research priorities on the problems of divorce, therefore, this study assumed that the adjustment of adolescents to parental divorce have to be examined carefully so that major social policies and welfare reforms need to be based on such research findings. Hence, this study aimed to answer the following research questions.

1. What characters of personality are linked with adolescents of divorced family?
2. How do adolescents of divorced family adjust to social challenges?
3. How do socio-demographic variables (e.g. sex, age) of adolescents (at time of parental divorce) affect their adjustments?

2. Literature Review

This article has summarized more recent findings on divorce and adolescent adjustment with respect to parental conflict, custodial access, and type of custody arrangement.

Adolescence has been defined as a crucial period of cognitive, psychosocial, and emotional transformations (Dubois, Burk-Braxton, Swenson, Tevendale, & Hardesty, 2002). According to Forgan and Vaughn (2000), the transition from

elementary school to middle school involves major environmental changes for students—changes that may tax students' sense of personal efficacy and competence. One of the most influential determinants of adolescent success with these negotiations is family structure (Fallon & Bowles, 2001). An exhaustive review of recent research showed that family structure determines adolescents' academic and social development (Brown, 2006). In particular, family structure bears important implications on adolescents' abilities to lead a successful navigation through school and into adulthood. However, one barrier to this success is divorce. Volumes of research have highlighted the negative effects of divorce on adolescent development (Boney, 2003).

Adolescents move from a personalized school environment of familiar peers to a new and more demanding milieu. Students have to reestablish their identities, including their sense of efficacy, social connectedness, and academic status within an enlarged, heterogeneous network of new peers and multiple teachers in rotating class sessions. Thus, this period is marked some loss of personal competence, control, and self-confidence for adjusting to middle school (Pintrich, 2003).

Marital conflict appears to have indirect effects on children's adjustment when expressed through the parent-child relationship. In married families, high marital conflict is associated with less warm, less empathic relationships between parents and children, and more rejection of the child (Belsky, Youngblade, Rovine, & Volling, 1991). There is also some evidence that fathers withdraw more from their children under conditions of high conflict. These parental behaviors, in turn, lead to more behavioral difficulties in the children. Moreover, continued high conflict after divorce may further interfere with parents' ability to nurture and be responsive to their children's needs and be consistent in discipline, which may exacerbate existing problems or create new problems for children. Family processes that exist during the marriage are critical in shaping divorced children's positive or negative psychological adjustment. Certain types of family, parental, or marital dysfunction, for example, appear to place children at risk long before divorce occurs. Some of the variables affecting children's adjustment during marriage include the magnitude of conflict between spouses, the nature of the parent-child relationship, parenting or child-rearing practices, the extent of anger toward or rejection of the child, the psychological adjustment of one or both parents, and the presence of violence.

Researchers agree that the degree of parental conflict is a major stressor and a salient risk factor associated with children's adjustment to parental separation and divorce (O'Conner, 2003; Rushena, Prior, Sanson & Smart, 2005). Some literature shows that children have greater psychological problems when their parents are in conflict, either during marriage or following divorce (Kelly & Lamb, 2003). Children from divorced but conflict-free homes have been found to have fewer behavioral problems than children remaining in a conflicted marriage. Children's adjustment improves when conflict declines after divorce (Kitzmann & Emery, 1994). Most experts agree that children will be better off living in a conflict free divorced family than a conflict ridden married one. Children are also at a higher risk for emotional difficulties when parents are too preoccupied with their own adjustment to carry out parental responsibilities adequately after the divorce (Bream & Buchanan, 2003), and when parental interest and investment after the divorce, as well as the parent-child relationship deteriorate (Kelly, 2007).

Pryor and Rodgers (2001) conducted an analysis of research studies into the well being of children following parental separation and divorce in areas including: social and emotional functioning in childhood, education and socio-economic

outcomes in adulthood, physical health and development in childhood and adulthood, mental health and well being in adolescence and adulthood, and family and intimate relationships in adolescence and adulthood. Pryor and Rodgers (2001) analyzed 13 studies which were conducted between 1944 and 1998 and compared children from separated and intact families in respect of social and emotional behavior in childhood and adolescence. They hardly found a study that shows children from separated families doing better than their peers from intact families. In one example, the Australian Mater Study of Pregnancy, 15 percent of children from divorced families showed withdrawn behavior at age five, compared with 10.3 percent of children from intact families (Noom, Deković, & Meeus, 1999).

There is considerable evidence which shows that social competence may present adjustment problems for children from a divorced family (Fantuzzo, McDermott, Manz, Hampton, & Burdick, 1996; Krumrei, Coit, Martin & Mahoney, 2007; Van Blerk, 2008). Social competence refers to the social, emotional, and cognitive skills and behaviors that children need for successful social adaptation. It defines a child's ability to establish and maintain high quality and mutually satisfying relationships and to avoid negative treatment or victimization from others. The term social skills describes the child's knowledge of and ability to use a variety of social behaviors that are appropriate to a given interpersonal situation and that are pleasing to others in each situation. The capacity to inhibit egocentric, impulsive, or negative social behavior is also a reflection of a child's social skills. Despite this simple definition, social competence is an elusive concept, because the skills and behaviors required for healthy social development vary with the age of the child and with the demands of particular situations. A child's social competence depends upon a number of factors including the child's social skills, social awareness, and self-confidence. In addition to social skills and emotional intelligence, factors such as the child's self-confidence or social anxiety can affect his or her social competence. Social competence can also be affected by the social context and the extent to which there is a good match between the child's skills, interests, and abilities and those of peers (Brendgen & Mara, 2004).

Nevertheless, there is no clear pattern across the range of outcome measures used in these studies, with differences of similar magnitude being found for a diverse range of behaviors including bed-wetting, withdrawn behavior, habit behaviors, social/attentional problems and other mixed social/emotional problems. There is some suggestion that effect sizes are larger for outcomes reflecting the receipt of treatment, as compared with other direct measures of behaviour, which indicates the possibility that the experience of parental separation and divorce increases the likelihood that a child is referred for behaviour problems, above and beyond the increased presence of the difficulties themselves (Pryor & Rodgers, 2001).

A study conducted among Kenyan juvenile delinquent shows that family instability gives rise to children with anti-social behavior. This finding implies that juvenile delinquency increases as marital stability decreases. Thus, there was more delinquency among children from unstable families than among those from stable families. Among delinquent children, findings showed that, while 68.2% of them came from single or no parent families, 31.8% came from two-parent families (Muola, Ndung'u & Ngesa, 2009). Similarly, Ogunleye (2012), in his work on adolescents development and social ties, found that the parent-child relationship, which is the platform of socialization for young adolescents, is associated with the development of such social skills as conflict resolution and intimacy, which serves as template for future relationships. The study also revealed that the social competence

of adolescents is a significant factor affecting their romantic relationship formation and sustenance in Nigeria.

Many studies have found that the problems observed after divorce were more severe and enduring for boys than for girls, although there is evidence that there are age- and sex-related differences. Girls initially experience more problems than boys when the parents' divorce during the children's adolescence (Frost & Pakiz, 1990), but younger school-aged-boys are initially more affected than girls.

It should be noted that, despite the more negative findings regarding children of divorce, the majority of divorced children, when assessed in the years after divorce, are functioning within normal or average limits. They are not, as a group, "disturbed," although media reports leave the casual reader with that impression. In fact, the mean differences between divorced and non-divorced groups of children, while statistically significant, are generally quite small on measures of emotional stability. The more sophisticated the study and analyses, the weaker the effect (Amato & Keith, 1991). Further, there is considerable range of functioning within groups of divorced and non-divorced children. Among divorced children are those functioning quite well, and among the non-divorced are children with major adjustment problems. In short, there is no one-to-one relationship between divorce and psychological adjustment problems in children. It is important to refrain from perpetrating the "child of divorce" as a person prototype, as this negative stereotype influences not only the children but those with whom they interact.

Moreover, it was found that Father-residence adolescents had poorer adjustment (more deviant behaviors) than did mother-residence adolescents, but father residence families had higher interviewer ratings of parent hostility than did the other two forms. The poorer adjustment of father-resident adolescents was associated with poorer monitoring in father-residence families, and for boys, more parent hostility and the parent's high working hours. Frey and Rothlisberger (1996) maintained that adolescents generally view the mother as the "emotional core" of the family because of her receptive and supportive role. Fathers, in contrast, are seen as "crisis managers" who offer help in problem situations.

As divorce and family research continues to point to the power of previously unstudied variables in determining children's adjustment, it sheds light on inconsistencies in the divorce literature. Some of the apparent contradictions are a function of which and how many variables are selected for study. Nevertheless, how those variables are measured, who the reporter is, and the age and demographic composition of the samples will affect the outcome.

3. Method

3.1 Design

Cross-sectional survey design was employed to investigate the influence of parental divorce on the personality and social adjustment of adolescent students, comparing groups of adolescents from divorced (single-parent) and continuously intact (two-parent) families.

Variables: the present research assumed 'Parental divorce' as independent variable and examined how it influences adolescent 'Personality' and 'Social adjustment' as dependent variables.

3.2 Participants

The study was conducted among purposely selected participants of Jimma, Agaro and Mizan town preparatory schools, between the time periods of January to November 2014. The study samples consisted of adolescents who were purposely selected and assigned into two groups based on their parents' current marital status, i.e., group of adolescents from divorced family and group of adolescents from intact family. Hundred twenty adolescent participants were represented in the research, and they were equally assigned in the divorced family and intact family groups. Sixty adolescents (21 females and 39 males) from a single-parent group served as the primary participants. The comparison group was formed, consisting of 60 participants from intact-family, and it is composed of adolescents in which the parents are married at the time of the assessment. Equal number of sample adolescents, twenty participants from each study site, was obtained from the three preparatory schools.

3.3 Measures

The following instruments were employed in the study:

The High School Personality Questionnaire (HSPQ). It was used to measure the Personality characteristics of adolescents. This test was developed in the USA by Cattell and Beloff and was adapted for the research use for 12- to 18-year-olds. The HSPQ measures 14 separate personality characteristics which was made to contain 80 items (from the original 142 items), and requires approximately 45 minutes to complete. Raw scores are converted into scaled scores with separate conversion tables for males and females. This questionnaire was chosen because it is the most general personality questionnaire for the sample adolescents, and it is both reliable and valid.

The Personality factors described in HSPQ are listed below: Factor A Warmth; Factor B, Intelligence; Factor C, Emotional Stability; Factor D, Excitability; Factor E, Dominance; Factor F, Cheerfulness; Factor G, Conformity; Factor H, Boldness, Factor I, Sensitivity; Factor O, Withdrawal; Factor Q2, Self-sufficiency; Factor Q3, Self-discipline; Factor Q-4, Tension (Cattell & Cattell, 1995).

In answering the items in each section, the respondents were required to award each item a number value between 1 and 6.

The scale used was:

1 = "...exactly how I experience it" 2 = "...most likely how I experience it"
 3 = "...likely how I experience it" 4 = "...unlikely how I experience it"
 5 = "...most unlikely how I experience it" 6 = "...absolutely not how I experience it"

The Perceived Competence Scale (Susan Harter, 1982). This self-report instrument places emphasis on the assessment of a respondent's sense of competence across 4 domains of competence, each constituting a separate subscale: (a) cognitive competence, with an emphasis on academic performance, (b) social competence, vis-a-vis one's peers, and (c) physical competence, with a focus on sports and outdoor games, and (d) general self-worth, independent of any particular skill domain, was included. The subscales are comprised of items as follows:

- (a) *Cognitive Competence: Items 1, 5, 9, 13, 17, 21 and 25*
(b) *Physical Competence: Items 3, 7, 11, 15, 19, 23 and 27*
(c) *Social/Peer Acceptance: Items 2, 6, 10, 14, 18, 22 and 26*
(d) *General Self-worth: Items 4, 8, 12, 16, 20, 24 and 28*

Each item is scored on a 4-point scale, where '4' represents the highest degree of perceived acceptance or competence.

- 4 = 'Really like me', 3 = 'Sort of like me',
2 = 'Sort of unlike me', and 1 = 'Really unlike me'.

Subscale scores are computed by adding values of individual responses, and computing mean scores. Higher scores reflect a greater sense of competence or social acceptance. Alpha coefficients for the subscales for both age groups ranged from .53 for Physical Competence to .83 for the general self-worth subscale. Harter and Pike found that their sample's competence judgments were related to their actual performance (Harter, 1999). To test the validity of the Social Competence domain, respondents' scores was correlated with their total scores on the Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction self-report measure, with the mother's report of Social Problems on the child behavioral checklist (CBCL), and with the teacher's report of Social Problems on the teachers' report function (TRF). A significant association was found between the child's self report of Social Competence and self-report of Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction ($r = -.47, p < .0001$), indicating that children gave consistent reports of their feelings in the social arena (Harter, 1999).

Socio-economic. Though not strictly a measure of socio-economic status, the study measured several variables which indicate SES levels. These data were collected through a general background information questionnaire developed to measure the sex, age, marital status, family type, religion, social support, education, employment, income, and housing condition of the sample subjects. Family socio-economic status refers to a family's relative position in a community as defined by income, occupation, and level of education, number of siblings per family and material possessions at home (Githua, 2002).

3.4 Procedures

The psychological measuring instruments were priory translated to Amharic and Afan Oromo languages through procedures of linguistic translation, and reviews were made to check the cultural sensitivity & appropriacy of items. Then, the psychometric quality (validity & reliability) of the instrument was checked following the pre-test administered on local people. The questionnaire was completed during school hours by each respondent in the sample; yet it was not completed simultaneously by all the participants. The possibility did, therefore, exist that respondents from one grade, who had already completed the questionnaire, may have discussed the questionnaire with respondents from another grade. But since this questionnaire did not measure achievement, any discussion by the participants was unlikely to have an influence on the results. Instructions were read aloud to the respondents before they completed the questionnaire. The participants were also given the opportunity to ask questions about any areas of confusion both before and during completion of the questionnaire. Moreover, preliminary questionnaire was administered to identify and get the consent of adolescents of divorced family.

Since the study aimed at comparing mean scores of data collected from two different sample groups, independent sample t-test was found appropriate to analyze the data. The mean score of the two sample groups (adolescent of divorced family and adolescent of intact family group) was analyzed using independent-sample t-tests and its significant level was tested at alpha level 0.05. The scores of the two groups were analyzed on measures of adolescents' personality and social competence. Moreover, the relation of the socio-demographic variables with the variables of adolescent functioning of each group was examined using correlation coefficient and tested at alpha level 0.05.

4. Results

4.1 Socio-demographic Characteristics

As indicated in table 1 below, the sex and grade level distribution of the 2 study groups was proportional: 39 (65.0%) male and 21(35.0%) female and 57% from 10+1 and 43% from 10+2 grade levels. Similarly, both research groups were matched with an average age of 16. This is due to the sampling procedure of matching the subjects of the two groups for the purpose of research comparison. However, the two research groups varied in their familial characteristics of education, occupation and income. From divorced group, 66.6%, 23.3% and 10.1% of participants come from families whose educational level were primary, secondary and tertiary level respectively. From intact group, 32%, 31.7% and 15% of participants come from families whose educational level were primary, secondary and tertiary level respectively. Also, the table indicates variation in the family income of the two groups in that the average monthly income of the intact group (1380.00 Birr) is higher than that of the divorced group (625.00 Birr).

Table 1: Adolescent Respondents' Socio-demographic Characteristics

Sex	Divorced Group		Intact Group	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Male	39	65.0	39	65.0
Female	21	35.0	21	35.0
Age	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
	16.4	0.96	16.33	1.02
Income (<i>Eth. Birr</i>)	625.00	109.00	1380.00	122.00

Moreover, the analysis of the socio-demographic characteristics of participants shown that the majority of mothers of the respondents (41.7% of the divorced group and 35.1% of the intact group) are house wives, the rest 23 (38.3%), 8 (13.3%), 4 (6.7%) of mothers of the divorced group, and 19 (31.7%), 7 (11.7%), 13 (21.5%) of mothers of the intact group are engaged in trade, administration and teaching occupations respectively.

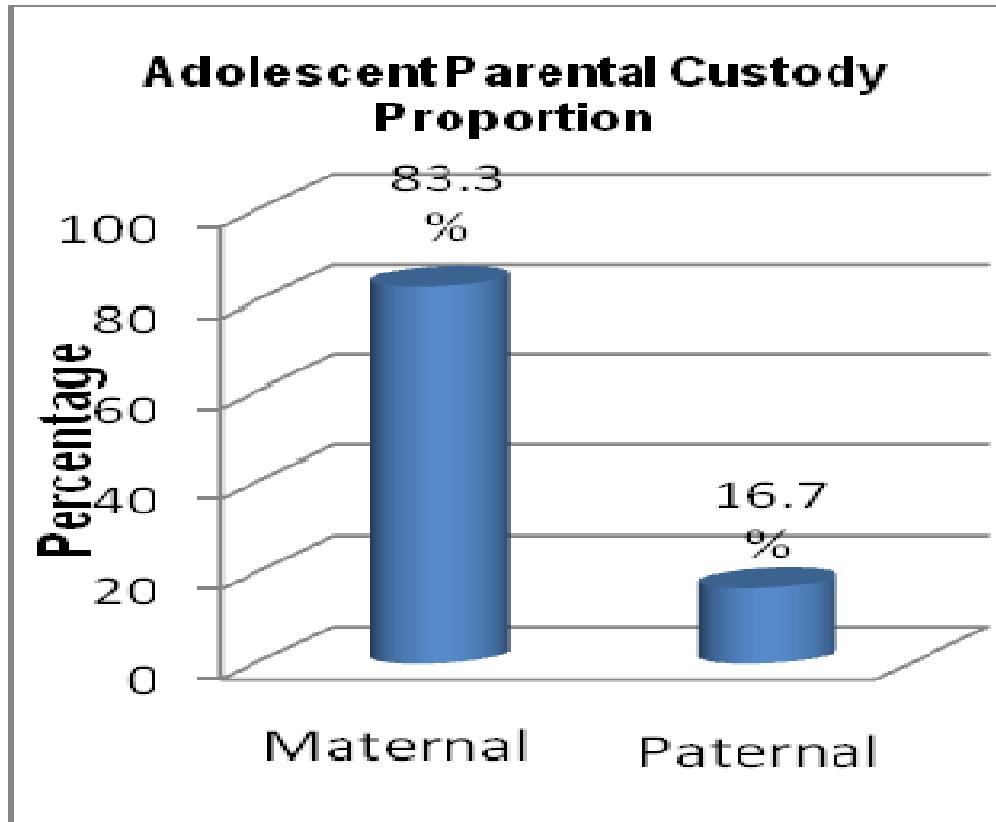


Figure 1: Parental Status of Adolescent Respondents' of Divorced Group

As indicated in the bar-charts, among adolescents of divorced family, 50 (83.3%) respondents reported that they are raised by their biological mother, and only 10 (16.7%) of them are raised by their biological father following parental divorce.

4.2 Adolescent Personality Characters

The t-test analyses revealed statistically significant gender mean scores differences on the 9 out of the 14 personality factors of HSPQ. As indicated in table 2, below, females scored higher than males on measures of Warmth, ($t = 6.62$, $\alpha = 0.05$), Emotional stability ($t = 1.55$, $\alpha = 0.05$), Self-discipline ($t = 4.56$, $\alpha = 0.05$), Withdrawal ($t = 2.58$, $\alpha = 0.05$) and Conformity ($t = 2.27$, $\alpha = 0.05$). Males scored higher than females on measures of Intelligence ($t = 2.90$, $\alpha = 0.05$), Dominance ($t = 7.27$, $\alpha = 0.05$), Self-sufficiency ($t = 2.74$, $\alpha = 0.05$), and Sensitivity ($t = 2.06$, $\alpha = 0.05$).

Moreover, to describe the personality characters of adolescents of divorced group the low score (below the normative mean score) and high score (above the normative mean score) measurements of the personality factors of the HSPQ was considered, taking into account the standard manual. Thus, as shown in Table 2 below, the mean score of adolescents of divorced family on personality factors of the HSPQ was higher on excitability ($M=4.32$), boldness ($M=3.82$), withdrawal ($M=3.66$), apprehension ($M=3.52$) and tension ($M=4.64$), and lower on emotional stability ($M=2.06$), warmth ($M=2.43$), self-discipline ($M=2.38$), and conformity ($M=2.40$).

Table 2: Means, Standard Deviations, and T-tests of the HSPQ

Variable Labels	Male (N=39)		Female (N=21)		t (M vs. F)
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	
1. Warmth	2.28	1.78	2.52	1.98	6.62
2. Intelligence	3.40	0.92	3.12	0.9	2.90
3. Emotional Stability	2.87	1.75	2.51	2.31	1.55
4. Dominance	4.12	1.77	3.71	1.66	7.27
5. Self-sufficiency	3.08	1.77	2.80	1.73	2.74
6. Self-discipline	2.10	2.05	2.64	2.04	4.56
7. Sensitivity	3.73	1.73	3.21	1.72	2.06
8. Withdrawal	3.37	1.79	3.71	2.32	2.58
9. Conformity	2.13	1.88	2.59	1.75	2.27

* $p < 0.05$; N=60 (two-tailed).

4.3 Adolescent Social Adjustment

As shown in Table 3, the comparison analysis showed statistically significant results on measures of HSPQ personality factors ($t = 1.18$, $\alpha = 0.05$). Adolescents from the divorced family group scored lower mean ($M=2.87$) than their counterparts from the intact family group ($M=4.35$).

The scale of social competence that measures the social adjustment of the two groups resulted in different mean score of 3.05 for adolescents of divorced family and mean score of 3.18 for adolescents of intact family. These mean scores were significantly different, $t = -3.07$, $\alpha = 0.05$. When adolescents of divorced family were examined in light with their parental custody (maternal versus paternal), it was found that their means were significantly different on perceived competence ($t = 3.45$, $\alpha = 0.05$), adolescents from the maternal custody scoring a higher mean.

Table 3: Comparisons of Divorced Group and Intact Group on Adolescent Personality and Social Competence

Area of functioning	Adolescent Group		Significance t-test, 1 vs. 2
	Divorced (1)	Intact (2)	
Personality	2.87	4.35	1.18
Social competence	3.05	3.18	-3.07

* $p < 0.05$; $N=120$ (two-tailed).

4.4 Correlation between Socio-demographic Factors and Adolescents' Adjustment

The statistical result, as shown in *Table 4* below, indicated that adolescent personality was correlated with sex ($r = .336^*$), family education ($r = .261^*$), and parental custody ($r = .204^*$). Moreover, the perceived social competence of these samples was found to be significantly associated with adolescent sex ($r = -.258^*$), family education ($r = .588^*$), and parental custody ($r = .619^*$). The correlation coefficients for the above psychological and social adjustment measures were significant at $\alpha=0.05$, $N=120$.

Table 4: Correlation between Socio-demographic Variable and Adolescents' Adjustment

<i>Socio-demographic factors</i>	<i>Adolescent adjustment</i>	
	<i>Personality</i>	<i>Perceived Competence</i>
Adolescent Sex	0.336*	-0.258*
Adolescent grade	0.158	-0.024
Adolescent Age	0.089	-0.221
F. Monthly Income	0.063	0.172
Mothers' Education	0.261*	0.588*
Mothers' Occupation	0.031	0.034
Paternal Custody	0.204*	0.619*

* *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), N=120*

5. Discussion

This study assessed the personality character of adolescents of divorced family and examined whether adolescent social adjustment problems have been attributed to parental divorce. Two groups (adolescents from divorced family and adolescents from intact family) were examined across two domains of adolescent functioning (personality characters and social competence) reported by multiple informants.

5.1 Personality Characters of Adolescents

During adolescence, the personality development reaches a crisis point, and the development of a unique and stable personality is often a very difficult aspect to deal with for adolescents from disturbed or divorced family (Ryan & Deci, 2003). As deduced from the data, adolescents of divorced family scored higher on personality factors of Excitability, Boldness, Withdrawal, Apprehension, and Tension. According to the HSPQ, such people are impatient, distractible, over-active, self-indulgent, prone to jealousy, egotistical, impulsive, carefree, and do not see danger signs; guarded, internally restrained, circumspectly individualistic, self-blaming, guilt-prone, insecure, worrying, anxious, easily touched and frustrated, and overwrought. Vitaro, Arseneault, and Tremblay's (1999) findings concerning impulsivity are in line with the current results. Several researchers (e.g., Bland, Newman, Orn, & Stebelsky, 1993) have characterized adolescents from separated families as having characteristics common to antisocial personality disorder.

Both Cherlin, Furstenberg, Chase-Landsdale, Kieman, Robins, Morrison & Teitler (1991) and Shaw, Emery, and Tuer (1993) found significantly higher rates of poor relationship with parents that subsequently related with maladaptive personality characters among adolescents of divorced family.

These adolescents scored lower on Emotional Stability, Warmth, Self-discipline, and Conformity personality factors of the HSPQ. These personality characters are an indicative of people with poor ego strength, emotionally immature, unrealistic, restless and irresponsible, cool, reserved, impersonal, aloof, critical, stands by his/her own ideas, distrustful, skeptical, rigid, undisciplined, self conflict, careless of social rules, uncontrolled, and follow his/her own urges, and expedient, self-indulgent, quitting, fickle, undependable, and disregards obligations to people. Several researchers suggested that parental divorce appears to have indirect effects on

adolescents' personality. This finding is consistent with the results reported by Belsky et.al. (1991) and Cowan (1999).

In divorced families, high child-parent conflict is associated with emotional distress and anger, less warm, less empathic relationships between parents and children and more rejection of the child. Asendorpf and Aken (2003) found that social withdrawal was related to peer relationships but not to family relationships. The results also concurred with the findings of Tatar (1998), Noom, et.al. (1999), and Laible, Carlo and Raffaelli (2000). Similarly, Vihjalmsson (1994) asserted that the quality of the parent-child relationship is an important predictor of the adolescent's personality.

The mean gender differences in the HSPQ are similar to those found by Amador, Martorell, and Forns (1993). Boys tend to have higher scores on intelligence, indicating that they might be bright, dominant, assertive, aggressive, stubborn, competitive, bossy, sensitive, over-protected, intuitive, refined, and self-sufficiency, and more resourceful than girls. This shows that boys are generally more reserved, detached, affected by feelings, emotionally less stable, sober, and serious than girls who are more outgoing, warmhearted, calm, emotionally stable, happy-go-lucky, enthusiastic and individualistic. However, girls tend to show being more participatory, out-going, calm, moralistic, rule-bounded, responsible, self-disciplined, and realistic than boys. It could be argued that females are more predisposed to adhere to more socialized behaviors and acceptance of social norms than males. These findings are similar to those found elsewhere (Piirto & Fraas, 1995).

5.2 Social Adjustment of Adolescents

The comparisons between the adolescents of divorced group and the intact group indicated significant differences between groups in the hypothesized direction (i.e., the divorced group will have lower social competence score) on the measures of adolescent functioning. Adolescents from divorced families scored significantly lower on social competence. The divorced group had lower levels of perceived competence than did the intact family group. Research suggests that children whose parents have divorced have more problems in social relationships and higher levels of externalizing behaviors and internalizing problems, lower academic achievement, than do children whose parents have not divorced. For example, middle school teachers noted that students of divorced parents show a decline in social behavior and academic achievement (Amato & Sobolewski, 2001). Seccombe and Warner (2003) reported that parental divorce can cause adolescent children to doubt their own abilities to achieve successful intimate relationships.

A large number of studies in the 1990s continued to find that children with divorced parents scored lower than children with continuously married parents on measures of social adjustment (Forehand, Neighbors, Devine, & Armistead, 1994), Social Competence (Beaty, 1995), and Self-concept (Wenk, Hardesty, Morgan, & Blair, 1994). A study conducted in Gojjam zone revealed that both children and adults in the divorced family develop poor social skill, anti-social behavior and psychological problems such as inferiority, stress, and depression (Askalemariam & Minwagaw, 2014).

This research also showed that adolescents with divorced parents, compared with adolescents of continuously married parents, scored lower on measures of personality factors (as Social boldness, Emotional stability, Tendency towards guilt, and Tension) on average. Children who experience parental divorce, compared with

children in continuously intact two-parent families, exhibit more conduct problems, more symptoms of psychological maladjustment, lower academic achievement, more social difficulties, and poorer self-concepts (Amato, 1994).

Adolescents under maternal custody more than adolescents under paternal custody, and boys more than girls exhibit more problems in relationship with parents and friends, impulsive and antisocial behaviors, willpower, and discipline and social correctness. Researches into the field of marital conflict and child adjustment indicate that boys were more at risk for adjustment problems than were girls (Steinberg, 2001). They also found that boys were more susceptible to psychological stresses within the family. They also found that marital discord and separation were associated with boys' deviance but not with girls'. A study conducted on marginalized adolescent groups in Addis Ababa showed that girls tended to channel their emotions inwards, while boys had an outward display of emotions, often resulting in physical violence. Boys also reported experiencing emotional stresses due to various causes such as being bullied or criticized and often expressed their frustrations through aggressive behavior (Van Blerk, 2008).

5.3 Socio-demographic Factors and Adolescents' Adjustment

Clearly, as Amato (2001) has stated, numerous mechanisms can account for parental divorce effects on children. The present study has found that the effect of parental divorce on adolescents' adjustment was associated with parental education, parental custody, and adolescents' sex. As there were differences in social functioning between adolescents from divorced families and from intact families, differences in some socio-demographic were also found. However, adolescents from the already divorced group were functioning more poorly than those from the intact group, as a function of differences in one or more of the socio-demographic factors. Adolescents from divorced family who had parents of lower educational level, lower family income, and under paternal custody were examined with lower level of social competence.

These findings are in agreement with studies conducted among Kenyan juvenile delinquents which show that family instability gives rise to children with disturbed psychological and social behavior (Doggett, 2009). Moreover, the perceived social competence was found comparatively weaker among adolescent girls, adolescents' from lower family educational level, and adolescents' under paternal custody, suggesting that the socio-demographic variables were accounted for the differences between adolescents in the two groups.

With respect to socio-demographic variables that appear to lower adolescents' social well-being following marital disruption include declines in household income, lower level of parental education, poor psychological functioning among resident parents, ineffective parenting from resident parents, loss of contact with nonresident parents, and continuing conflict between parents and the absence of cooperative co-parenting behavior (King & Sobolewski, 2006; Fabricius & Luecken, 2007; Cavanagh, 2008). In line with this, a study conducted in Butajira district of Southern Ethiopia shows that age and urban residence are significant correlates of behavioral disorders in children (Ashenafi, Kebede, Desta & Alem, 2000).

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

The current research findings were consistent with the results reported in several researches though they contradicted with few other studies. However, the

findings that adolescents from divorced group were functioning more poorly than those from the intact family group provides stronger support than contradicting studies for the role of divorce in adolescent functioning.

In conclusion, the results from this study provide support for the hypothesis that the negative effects of divorce associated with adolescents of divorced family already exist. Parental divorce, and its accompanying disruption of family processes, is associated with adolescent social adjustment difficulties. It provides further evidence to earlier studies that conclude:

- ✓ Adolescents from divorced family have weak social competence as compared to adolescents from intact family.
- ✓ The personality of adolescents from divorced family is characterized by traits as emotionally immature, distractible, restless and irresponsible, self-blaming, feelings of guilt & tension, insecure, worrying, anxious, irritability, individualism and self-sufficiency, social withdrawn, undisciplined, self-conflict, careless of social rules as examined from High-School Personality Questionnaire (HPSQ).
- ✓ The problem of social adjustment to divorce found to be more serious on boys than girls.

Adolescent personality and social adjustment to parental divorce is affected by socio-demographic factors, including adolescent sex, parental educational level, and parental custody.

It is important to note that samples, informants, age of informants, tools and type of data collected, time of assessment relative to parental divorce, methods of data analysis, and other study variables varied widely in this study and across studies. For example, the sample size of the divorced groups varied substantially across studies; however, divorce problems have been found with small (Boney, 2003) and large (Cherlin et al., 1991) sample sizes. As this example demonstrates, examination of the studies revealed a systematic similarity on these characteristics between studies which did and did not find divorce adolescent effects.

Some strengths of the current study include the inclusion of comparative sample group, children in one stage of development (adolescence), multiple measures, and contextual socio-demographic variables. In addition to these strengths, major weaknesses of the study should be noted: A relatively small sample size was utilized; adolescent pre-divorce adjustment was not assessed, and statistical analysis that further investigates the independent effect of variables was not calculated.

Beyond these constraints, generalization of the findings to cultural groups should be investigated in the future. Moreover, continued attention to the effect of divorce and the role of related mechanisms prior to and after parental divorce is important to our understanding of child functioning and to the development of intervention programs for these children.

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