Young people lived experience of parental divorce with an emphasis on educational consequences

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ARTICLE INFORMATION	ABSTRACT
Article type Original research Pages: 11-18 **Corresponding Author's Info** Email: dr.mojtabar17@gmail.com **Article history:** Received: 2023/04/16 Revised: 2023/06/23 Accepted: 2023/07/01 Published online: 2023/11/02 **Keywords:** *divorce, parents, family, youth, education.*	**Background and Aim:** Divorce has adverse effects on children and can have adverse effects on their mental and physical health. Also, divorce has negative effects on children's education. Based on this, the aim of the present study was to investigate the lived experience of young people from their parents' divorce, emphasizing the educational consequences. **Methods:** The present research method was qualitative with thematic analysis and applied in terms of purpose. The participants included high school students of Kurdish city in the academic year of 2022, who were selected purposefully. Some of the criteria for their selection were the experience of parental divorce and the desire to participate in the research. Also, the interviews were continued up to 14 cases based on the theoretical saturation criterion. For validity, face validity was used and for reliability, the agreement coefficient between coders was used, and the result of recoding was 0.86. For data analysis, manual coding method was used in the form of open, axial and selective coding. **Results:** The findings showed that 162 open codes, 13 core themes include: taunting by peers, blaming family, stigma of school environment, shame of divorce, family instability, children's cold heart, emotional void, reluctance to study, excessive study fatigue, drop in academic mentality, Change in academic priority, academic aspirations, lack of morale and vitality, weak self-confidence, increased isolationism and increased introversion and 6 optional themes including: social stigma, cultural challenges, emotional challenges, poor education, academic conflict and psychological consequences for the lived experience of young people. Parental divorce was identified with an emphasis on educational outcomes. **Conclusion:** Based on the results, it can be concluded that divorce creates different and negative challenges for children and their education, which cultural and educational planners of the country can reduce the negative effects of these effects by empowering them.

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Introduction

Youth includes a certain period of people's lives, the effects of which are inevitable on their lives in the future (Cheng & Shaowitz, 2022). High school students who are in this course, their academic success is undoubtedly influenced by various factors. One of these important factors is the family environment. The family is always the first place of people's lives where they are born and start their education and socialization (Martinez, Lopez, and Agular, 2020). In fact, the home environment provides conditions in which a person adapts and coordinates his growth. These conditions can be such as parents' expectations and documents, learning structure, emotional environment of the home, discipline and parental involvement. Therefore, convergence in family factors is a critical factor for student success (Christensen, Ronadz, and Gurney, 1992).

One of the important factors related to family structure is related to parents' relationships, which can influence the future of young people (Pirzadeh & Parsakia, 2023). The manner and interactions of parents is a factor that can facilitate or slow down the path of a person's success. (Brand et al., 2019).

Divorce is one of the factors whose role in the growth and development of family members has been shown in numerous researches. Studies show that with the increase of divorce, families and human society are under threat and it is surprising that little investment is made to prepare people for a common life and not to separate it (Khatibi & Ali Khanipour, 2022).

Divorce is known as an adverse childhood experience. Adverse childhood experiences are psychologically traumatic events that occur throughout a child's life and between the ages of 0-17" (Al Qaribah, 2015). Divorce has pervasive and deplorable effects on children due to the negative effects it has on the child's educational progress, health and mental stability. Divorce and other adverse childhood experiences have one major theme in common, and that is the enormous amount of stress placed on children. This amount of stress that young children face is known as toxic stress, which is a prolonged period of stress (Thomas, 2020). This is because these people usually lacked the guidance and support of their parents to distinguish between good and bad when they

were children. As a result, these people face an increased risk of injuries such as sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy at a young age, sexual exploitation and a wide range of chronic diseases such as: cancer, diabetes, heart diseases and suicide (Daroni, Salim, and Sonardi, 2019). Divorce of parents at a young age creates many challenges for children. In a research study with a sample of 170 children, young children who were younger than 5 years of age, that is, children aged 15, 24, and 36 months, performed more poorly than children of the same age who lived with both parents. (Clark-Steward et al., 2000). On the other hand, although young children are more exposed to psychological trauma caused by the separation of their parents, teenagers are also exposed to these difficult conditions (Schramm & Becher, 2020). Adolescence is a time when children are discovering themselves and realizing who they really are. As children need the best guidance and support in these years, the mental health of many children is strengthened and needs practice. As a result, this period of children's life is very sensitive and at the time of self-knowledge of the child, divorce is considered a threat for him. The researchers came to the conclusion that, despite these ways of showing emotions that younger children lack, divorce is still a big obstacle in the development of adolescents' lives (Chess-Landsdela, 1995).

The effects of divorce in adolescence and youth are also significant. Expulsion theory states that students may be expelled from school due to poor academic performance, moral issues, and disciplinary actions for low participation or misbehavior. Also, the academic failure theory states that the risk of dropping out may increase in many children due to the lack of academic and personal support, including the lack of support from parents, teachers, and peers (Saphara et al., 2016). Many of these theories, especially the theory of academic failure, show the negative effects of divorce on academic achievement. High school students who experience parental divorce are more likely to be classified as underachieving, to earn lower grades in core subjects (eg, reading, math, and science) and to earn lower GPAs (Gonzalez & Witanen, 2018). Due to children being exposed to such a painful experience, their level of progress begins to decline and they lose the motivation they once had. These consequences

that students face slowly affect them in the long run, such that a low GPA may deprive them of the possibility of entering the university of their choice, or even the possibility of entering the university altogether. As a result, due to the effects of divorce, the educational motivation that the child once had with the marriage of his parents is lost, and as a result, the progress and success that was once his main priority in life is lost (Saphara et al., 2016).

Divorce has a negative effect on children's academic progress. Research has proven that the level of education of children who live with their divorced/separated mother is lower than the level of education of children who live with both parents (Albertini & Drankers, 2009). For children going through divorce, this is even more the case, as these children no longer aspire to excel or achieve success due to the turmoil and chaos in their homes. Researchers have stated that in all single-parent families, the number of children with only a primary education degree is much higher than in other families (Goto, Bernardi, & Zanassi, 2022). Also, children who experience parental divorce are held back from academic progress because children grow up and take on adult roles faster than expected. Some of these adult roles are assigned to the individual due to the economic record of single-parent families. For example, due to divorce, the parents are trying to financially pressure the child to support the single parent with whom he lives. Statistically, it has been proven that the change of conditions from "usually living with two parents to a single parent household is associated with a decrease in the income of the head of the household, and children have less financial resources compared to a child who lives properly and with both parents". (Saphara et al., 2016). Teenagers in high school take on the responsibility of working, hoping to help their parents with expenses. As a result, since divorce leads to their expulsion from school, these children fall victim to the theory of expulsion from school as an unfortunate event. Also, divorce has adverse effects on mental health. Statistics show that children who grow up in divorced families have significantly more behavioral problems than those in healthy families. And these observations appear immediately after separation and a little later, that is, in the middle of adolescence (Weaver & Schofield, 2015). Considering that these people have experienced

such a bitter event, they are more likely to show their anger and rage outside the house and in front of others, causing moral issues in life. As a result, after divorce, negative behaviors in children are likely to increase. They turn to this negative behavior as a way to express their feelings due to an adverse childhood experience that occurred in their lives. This behavior continues until adolescence. Compared to students from healthy families, college students whose parents are divorced show more violent and aggressive behaviors towards their peers (Fagan & Churchill, 2012).

Studies have been done about parental divorce and its various effects. In a research, Rashidi and Sadat (2021) investigated the different effects of divorce on children's learning and education. They concluded that divorce has a significant and negative effect on students' learning and understanding of educational matters, and in this regard, these students are better than their counterparts whose parents did not divorce. Mehdi Moghadam et al. (2022) showed in a research that students who have made significant academic progress compared to their peers; They have enjoyed a very warm and intimate family environment, and they have benefited from the love and encouragement of their parents, a positive attitude and a rich and strong motivation towards school and studying. Fathi (2020) concluded in a research that the academic progress of students who were in a warm and friendly family environment of Bu.dand parents was higher than students who had even higher IQ but did not have a warm family environment. Bayert and Vander Straten (2021) showed in a research that the consequences of divorce are many, so that the therapeutic effect of divorce in the years before and after divorce cannot be considered as having a special value, and therefore it shows on the education of their children. Iqbal et al. (2021) concluded in a research that parental divorce has a significant negative effect on the social and social status of children. It also creates an unfavorable situation for children in terms of academic performance. In a research, Nielsen et al. (2020) concluded that there is a negative relationship between parental divorce and grade point average among teenagers, so that children with divorced parents had a worse situation than their peers with a close family environment. Demir-Daghdas et al. (2018) concluded that parental divorce is associated

with significant adversities in their mental health, family relationships, and education, and in the long term, these negative effects increase. Regarding the necessity of research, it should be said that divorce has adverse effects on mental health and even the academic success of students, which still needs to be studied and researched. On the other hand, qualitative research and the students' own views and the effects of divorce on education are less available and a research gap has formed. Therefore, the main goal of the current research is to investigate the lived experience of young people from their parents' divorce, emphasizing the educational consequences.

Method
The present research method was qualitative with theme analysis and practical in terms of purpose. The participants included high school students of Kurdish cities in the academic year of 2022, who were selected purposefully. Also, the interviews were continued up to 14 cases based on the theoretical saturation criterion. Some of their selection criteria were having experience of parental divorce and willingness to participate in the study.

Materials
1. Semi-structured interview: The research tool was semi-structured interviews, where some questions were asked in advance and some questions during the interview. The validity of the tool was done with face validity and reliability based on the agreement coefficient between coders. In addition to reviewing the entire coding process by the researcher, an experienced coder was asked to randomly select the right text of 3 interviews and re-code, and the result of this process was 0.86 agreement coefficient.

Implementation
The method of conducting the research was such that first the participants were identified during a certain period of time and the participants themselves were asked to introduce if they knew a friend or someone whose parents got divorced. Schools were also helped in this regard. After obtaining their consent and preliminary arrangements, preparations were made to conduct an interview with them. Most of the interviews were conducted in the school environment and some in the park. Questions were asked to the participants without chronological order and they were asked to recount what they experienced during and after the divorce of their parents. The interview time lasted on average 40 minutes and tried to discuss everything that the participants consider important. The interviews continued until theoretical saturation, which happened in interview number 12, and researcher felt that the subsequent interviews did not add anything new to the findings, however, 2 additional interviews were conducted and the work ended with 14 interviews. The text of each interview was immediately analyzed, and wherever there was ambiguity, it was referred back to the original content, and sometimes the participant was contacted again to provide clearer explanations. Manual coding method was used in the form of open, axial and selective coding for data analysis.

Results
In terms of demographic indicators, 9 people (0.64) were in the 12th grade and 5 people (0.36) were in the 11th grade. Also, 11 people (0.78) were boys and 3 people (0.22) were girls. 10 people (0.71) of them had experienced divorce of their parents for more than 5 years and 4 people (0.28) had less than 5 years of divorce. Also, currently 4 (0.28) of them only have a relationship with their mother, 5 (0.36) with their father and another 5 (0.36) have a relationship with both parents.

Table 1. Coding process of young people's lived experience of parental divorce		
Open coding	Axial coding	Selective coding
Teasing friends to family **Intended jokes** **Generalizing the future of parents to children**	Taunting peers	Social stigma
Family tease **Questioning the family's reputation** **Inappropriate jokes** **Humiliate**	Blame of family	
Special psychological care (counseling) **Teachers' point of view**	Stigma in school	
Shame on parents' divorce	Shame	Cultural challenges

Divorce of parents **The challenge of parental divorce**		
Lack of a stable family **Lack of parental support**	Family instability	
Parental self-centeredness **Ignoring the future of children**	Discouragement of children	Emotional challenges
Lack of intimate relationships **Creating hatred with parents** **Reluctance to meet parents**	Emotional void	
Reluctance to study **Study fatigue** **Drop in academic mentality** **Changing curriculum priority**	Decreased interest in school	Educational numbness
Loss of career aspirations **The loss of dreams of passing the entrance exam** **Uncertain educational future**	Academic aspirations	Educational conflict
Lack of vitality **Lack of spirit of life**	Lack of spirit and vitality	Psychological consequences
Lack of concentration in doing things **Fear of being on social media** **Lack of belief in one's own abilities**	Weak self-confidence	
A desire for seclusion **Depression**	Increasing isolation	
Hiding feelings **Blame the family** **Lack of communication with others**	Increased introversion	

The results of Table 1 show that the result of the coding process includes 13 core themes: sarcasm, blaming the family, stigma of the school environment, shame from divorce, family instability, children's discouragement, emotional void, reluctance to study, excessive study fatigue, drop in academic mentality, change in academic priority, academic aspirations, lack of spirit and vitality, poor self-confidence, increased isolation and increased introversion. Also, optional themes include: Social stigma, cultural challenges, emotional challenges, poor education, academic conflict and psychological consequences. In the following, the selected themes of the research are explained.

social stigma

This theme indicates that all kinds of blames and taunts expressed by others and friends caused discomfort and reactions in the children of divorce. For example, a participant believed that: What about your father. Why did your father divorce your mother (Participant 10) Or another participant believed that our future (children) is in danger because when we want to go for marriage, they may say that you had a family that experienced the divorce of parents, and this may cause them not to give us the desired girl (participant 2).

Cultural challenges

Cultural challenges refer to concepts that cause discomfort and shame for children in society regarding parents' divorce. For example, a participant believed that: whenever divorce is discussed, I feel really embarrassed and it makes me feel angry. I mean, when I'm in public, I'm afraid they'll say you're from divorced parents, and that makes me resentful (Participant 4). Or the other believed that in the society, although the shame of divorce was much stronger before, it is now less. But I feel very offended when they told me at school that your parents got divorced. I don't like to appear in public and say that the issue of divorce and... will come up (Participant 5).

Emotional challenges

Emotional challenges refer to emotional gaps and deficiencies created for children due to parents' separation. Emotional challenges can cause depression and lack of affection in children. For example, a participant believed that: I haven't even laughed for 2 years because nothing matters to me anymore (Participant 1). Another participant believed that: My classmates (girls) always laugh at school and say that today I went to the market with my mom to buy me a beautiful dress. That one says that on my birthday, my father promised to buy me something and... now I just listen and I feel greed in my body (Masharekesh 10).

Educational numbness
Educational numbness means that the children of divorce do not want to continue their education or do not intend to continue their education in the future. For example:
I don't want to study anymore because studying is expensive and my father, although I have a relationship with him, doesn't pay much attention to me (Participant 8). I plan to drop out of school at the end of the year and go for an apprenticeship to learn something so that I can live independently in the future. Even now, I go to a mechanic after the school shift and I want to learn to be a good teacher (Participant 6).

Educational conflict
In the present study, academic involvement was also a measure of the student's effort and perseverance in doing academic work. For example, a participant believed that:
I don't feel like studying anymore and I don't want to try harder. Because my mother, who was a teacher, used to help me in math, but now she is not as usual and I don't want to either (Participant 11). Also: I was very persistent in 10th grade, I even planned for entrance exam, but now with the separation of my parents, I no longer need that persistence (Participant 12). Or another participant believed that: effort and effort are for a time, one feels that one will get somewhere, not now, my parents separated, I am also caught up in this issue (Participant 3).

Psychological consequences
Psychological consequences include a wide range of psychological characteristics. The participants mentioned different dimensions of these consequences. For example: one of the interviewers believed that when the spirit of cheerfulness prevails, firstly, you have a family that supports you in times of need, and secondly, when the family falls apart, it means that you lack joy and cheerfulness (participant 2). Another believed that: I have been living with my father since the day (last 3 years) when my mother filed for divorce, but I do not have the necessary self-confidence in life and I do not even focus on small tasks (participant, 5). I haven't told anyone about my heart for a long time and I hide it in my heart. Family divorce made me not trust anyone (Participant, 11).

Conclusion
Divorce has adverse effects on children and can have adverse effects on their mental and physical health. Also, divorce has negative effects on children's education. Based on this, the aim of the present study was to investigate the lived experience of young people from their parents' divorce, emphasizing the educational consequences.
The findings showed that the result of the coding process includes 13 core themes: sarcasm, blaming the family, stigma of the school environment, shame from divorce, family instability, children's discouragement, emotional void, reluctance to study, excessive study fatigue, drop in academic mentality, change in academic priority, academic aspirations, lack of spirit and vitality, poor self-confidence, increased isolation and increased introversion. Also, 5 optional themes include: Social stigma, cultural challenges, emotional challenges, poor education, academic conflict and psychological consequences. The findings of this research were consistent with the results of Rashidi and Sadat (2021), Mehdi Moghadam et al. (2022), Fathi (2020), Bayert and Vander Straten (2021), Iqbal et al. In explaining the results, divorce must be accompanied by different social, cultural and psychological consequences for the husband and wife as well as the children. Divorce exposes the foundation of the family to collapse. Although children may continue to live with one parent, the emotional void of the absence of each parent always leaves negative effects on the children (Khatibi & Ali Khanipour, 2022). For example, social stigma is a kind of reaction to the conditions from outside and by different people and groups according to the Koran of divorce (children). In fact, the children of divorce are exposed to all kinds of sarcastic words and behaviors; Therefore, we can conclude that divorce creates a kind of social pressure for children from the outside by peers and friends and even acquaintances, which can witness its negative effects in the later stages of life. Another finding was cultural challenges, which included two components of shame from "divorce" and "family instability". Another finding of the research was the theme of emotional challenges. When parents get divorced, the center of family intimacy declines. Family is the first and most important place to create love and affection for children. In the period of adolescence and youth, children are in the period of growth and development, when the need for emotions is felt more and more.

Therefore, the lack of affection and its absence from parents can make children face various challenges (Thomas, 2020).

Another finding of the research was the theme of low-prosperity education. In explaining this finding, it can be said that when parents divorce, various financial and non-material support for children is reduced. In fact, children need financial support and foresight to continue their education. When divorce occurs during the education period of the children, attention to academic activities becomes a challenge. Also, academic conflict can be one of the consequences of parents' divorce, causing children to have problems with academic matters. Academic conflict is attention to academic affairs and activities. When parents get divorced, their children lose the necessary attention and energy towards lessons and homework. Another finding of the research was psychological consequences. In explaining this finding, it can be said that parental divorce has the greatest impact and negative effects on children's personality. Children may become isolated or aggressive. In other words, divorce causes the spirit of cheerfulness and happiness to leave the family center and children's self-confidence decreases.

Among the limitations of the current research, it can be mentioned that this research was conducted with a qualitative method, and to enrich the results, quantitative and integrated methods can also be used. Another thing is that, in the present study, the issue of parental divorce was only on high school students, and the first and elementary school years were not considered. It is suggested that researchers in the future should use the combined method and consider other age groups as well. It is suggested that empowering classes in a friendly environment should be considered in schools for students who experience parental divorce. Another suggestion is that schools should try to involve both parents so that parents do not cut off their relationship with the school and the student is not emotionally neglected by them.

Conflict of Interest

According to the authors, this article has no financial sponsor or conflict of interest.

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