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REVIEW ARTICLE

The Psychological and Emotional Stages of Divorce

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Introduction

Divorce can have substantial effect on the life of every individual in the family; it has huge impact on socio-financial status of the families. Islamic religious consider the importance of marriage stability, but except divorce as last solution for irreparable or unsustainable couple relationship [1].

It is more prevalent in families of lower socioeconomic status in Gulf Countries Collaboration (GCC), in families with high psychological distress and family dysfunction [2]. Divorce also, common in western countries, one half of marriage are ended with divorce [3].

Divorce is starting by either emotional or psychological divorce and then, ending by legal divorce, but majority of couple's relationship beings and persists in an emotional divorce [4].

Habitually, divorce is never prepared procedure, it is consequence of both partner suffering from imminent, painful five stages of emotional transitions with an average of three years duration to reach legal divorce. In each divorce, there is an "initiator" spouse wants divorce, while "non-initiator" spouse wouldn't want divorce [4]. The marital problems are related to misperception and irrational beliefs of one partner in the couple. It is very important to keep in mind that marriage breakup is not the fault of one party, and it needs long term, couple relationship, breaking up process [5].

The characteristics of healthy couples are adapt to many challenges, adapt to transformation ability, fidelity to family bound, expression of high appreciation, high social connectedness, clear roles and boundaries

between couples, cooperation rather than competitive relationship [6,7].

Aim

To educate family physician about early stages of psychological and emotional stages in marital divorce for early prevention and management.

The stages of the psychological and emotional divorce are five transitional zones such as: [4,8].

Stage one: Blaming the spouse and disillusionment of one party

The couple started to blame each other for past, present and even future problems in their life. The initiator developed negative self-image, vague feelings of dissatisfaction, stored angers, greater distance, lack of mutuality, anxiety, depressed mood, feel upset, guilty feeling and experiences a low energy level. Moreover he/she has masked feeling of blame, fear, anger, depression, stubborn behaviour. While the receiver developed feeling of disbelief, denial, divorce opposed helplessness, lack of control, fear of the unknown and shock feelings.

The counsellor or mediator roles are many; the counsellor should fosters couple sense of control on their lives, neutralizes their fear from physical and emotional separation process, In addition, supports making short-term decisions concerning the physical separation. The counsellor should maintain structures information gathering for better parenting skills and have good support system for roller coaster couple feelings.



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Stage two: Mourning the loss and expressing dissatisfaction

It is stage of profound painful feeling of grief, hopeless, meaningless torture life, overly sensitive to any comments, intense preoccupation, difficulty concentrating on tasks and loss of parenting role.

The counsellor or mediator roles are; continue on give couple a short-term tasks, allows the couple to go through grieving process, redirected the couple from "poor me" attitude, accept the grief process, and let couple realize of the divorce process, by given structured information gathering. The counsellor tries to find a common foundation or constructive channelled for couple to work toward a fair settlement for their benefit.

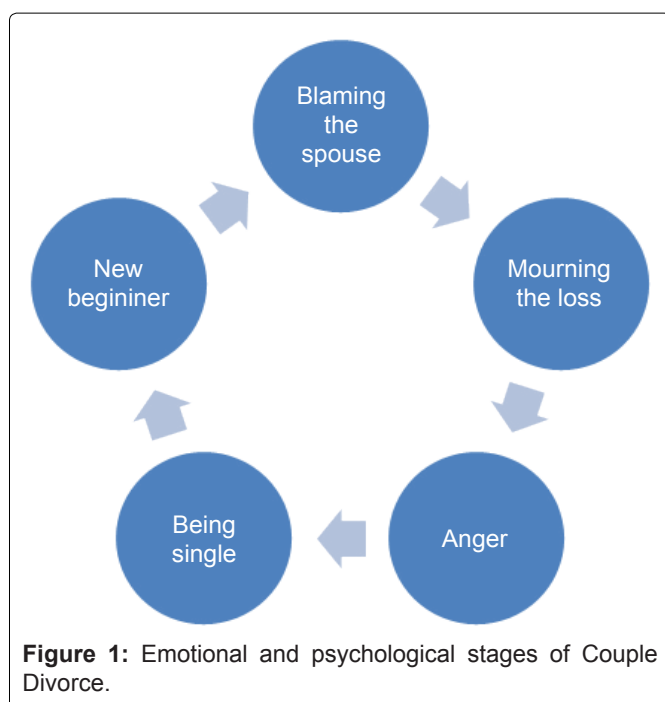
Stage three: Anger and resentment

It is stage of rage, feeling of being betrayed, and anger from "all women" or "all men." The anger attempts to annoyance the bad, wronged couple and deserves to suffer. Behind the anger, there are many fears and uncertainty about future, finance, finding other understanding couple. One or both partner is expressing relationship dissatisfaction or uncertainty, tension, emotional roller coaster.

The counsellor or mediator roles are; neutralize couple anger rather than putting fuel to fire, direct energy of anger to constructive tasks, improve couple's decision-making abilities, provide couple with short and long term problem solving skills, and try to put the couple in reality testing.

Stage four: Being single and deciding to divorce

It is stage of felling freedom from couple constrains, creating more emotional distance and trying new affair,



tries out new experience of independency, trying new activity, making your own decisions, increase trust and self-confidence, improved self-image, return parenting role and work role.

The roles of counsellor or mediator are many; improved direct couple communication skills, increase co-parenting cooperation skills, recover relationship interaction, and help couple in long-term planning. The counsellor should choice appropriate time for efficient and less painful mediation that the couple in a relatively good emotional phase.

Stage five: New beginnings and acting on decision

It is stage of physical and emotional flare-ups separation, self-orientation and self-settle down, being in control, makes long-term plans and commitments, accepts the end of the marriage and creates a fair agreement (Figure 1).

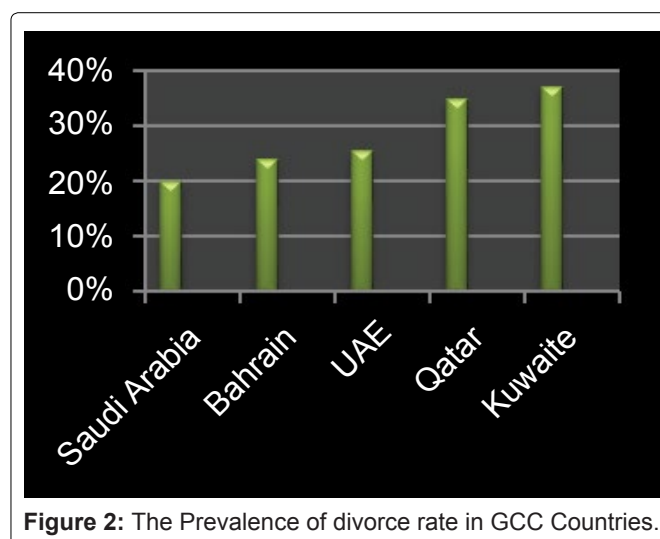
The family physician roles are; to concentrate on future of the family rather than on past, it is period of smooth transition, encourage couple for new life and to accept ending the marriage and to start new bright life.

In general, the family physician should understand the divorce process and accept couple different reaction, and counsellor should help to provide common ground for constructive discussion and better environment for information gathering to assess fair agreement.

The divorce rate is quiet high in the GCC which is very serious problem effect on family causing pain, and destroyed beautiful relationship. It could change family life radically [9].

The prevalence-2009 have reached 20% in Saudi Arabia, 24% in Bahrain, 25.62% in the UAE, 34.76% in Qatar and 37.13% in Kuwait (Figure 2) [9].

Divorce rate = is expressed as a percentage rate, the numerator is the number of marriages each year, while the dominator is the number of divorce for that year [9].



The Main Causes of Divorce in Gulf Countries are Many

Infidelity

Underground extramarital affair is the main cause of divorce in Gulf region. Unfaithful relationships are more common in male (19%) than in female (6%) [4,8,9].

Poor communication

Poor social communication skills especially in different cultural backgrounds, leads to arguments and not solving conflicts, accumulate emotional scars sufferings.

Religious and cultural differences

It is common in gulf countries to have marriage between people of different religions/cultures and different nationalities are common which with these differences leads to marriage breakdown.

Lack of support system

Every couple need support system from family and friends, while foreigner is vulnerable couple of suffering the relocation or feeling disappointment lonely, heart-break and depressed.

Unrealistic expectations

False, high, and unrealistic expectations from life or from partner roles are also reasons for failed marriages among Emiratis.

Social networking

Couple addiction to social network (Facebook and Twitter) is also important reason for destroying their relationships. More than 80% of population is registered with social networking, and more couples are blaming network addiction.

Sexual incompatibility

Long travels to work, work stress, sedentary life style, may affect on sex drive and erectile dysfunction which cause stress in relationships.

Financial negligence

Money is problem both individuals have different ideas regarding money management, especially when a partner gets more than the other.

Child rearing issues

In the absence of a family support structure, many new working partners are confused to share children responsibilities, strain often causing strain in marriage, resulting in separation.

While other studies, showed the causes of the divorce were related to many factors, such as maladjustment, addiction, psychological conflicts and unemployment [10,11].

While, the psychological effect of the divorce on couples and families are different, such as: [8,12-14].

Psychological impact on initiator: The initiator will experience fear, distance, impatience, resentment, doubt, and guilt, creates distance, blaming and fault finding.

Psychological impact on receiver: The receiver will experience shock, disloyalty, loss of control, ill-treatment, decreased self-esteem, insecurity, anger, a desire to "get revenge", and wishes to settle down.

Psychological impact on women: Women take divorce decision more frequently. She will have 90% custody of their children. They are mostly need financial and family support to raise their children with single parent. 75% receive court-ordered child support. Women have less stressful experience and better adjustment than men. The reasons for this are that; women sensor is high for marital disharmony, feel relief after divorce, she depends on social support systems, she experience high self-esteem for her new role. Divorced women feels social stigma more than male.

Psychological impact on men: Men will have better emotional adjustment system; men get married again more quickly, they have sufficient time, greater compliance with their children; they need more energy to rescue the marriage.

Psychological impact on children: The psychological impact on children depends on three factors: the quality of family relationship, intensity and duration of family conflict, and covering children needs after divorce. The children, who succeed after divorce, have paternities that can communicate effectively and together as parents.

Boys will have greater social and academic mal-adjustment; boys are more act out their anger externaly, more frustration and hurt. Boys easily get trouble in school, fight peers and parents.

While, girls tend to internalize their distress, but developed more depression, headaches or stomach aches, and have changes in their eating and sleeping patterns.

A constrain in financial income lead to decrease proper nutrition, drop in having designer jeans and fancy shoes, increase time for supervised child care. The important factor is the quality and quantity of the involvement of a father in a child's life which depend on mother attitude and acceptance father role.

Last Word

Justice and Islamic Affairs in Bahrain announce that there is temporary dropping by third in divorce rate from 15% in 2008 to 5% in 2012, but there is considerable increase in divorce rates on consecutive years to reach 23-24% in 2013-2014, in spite of raise public awareness about the negative impact of divorce on family and even though the good effort from family guidance offices and places of worship.

Bahraini women feel more secure, more independent more empowered and supported and refuse marital disharmony sufferings [15,16].

Kingdom of Bahrain needs premarital/marital counseling preparation by social workers to solve conflict, to improve their communication and to except couple differences.

More separation and divorce could be prevented if we have family counselors or family therapist.

The main cause of separation in Bahrain is bad communication and bad conflict management, emotional/physical abuse, unresolved hidden agenda, different in couple mentality. Other causes are drugs/alcohol abuse or having an emotional disorder, lack of financial support and infidelity, while the main common reasons for GCC divorces are couples are coming from diverse background, the families make many couples arranged marriage and early marriage for young age group, modernization of society in GCC. The age group of couples divorce is more in younger age group (20-30 years); more likely to separate during the initial years of marriage [6]. The number of men and women under the age of 18 who got married in the last five years ranged from 6% to 7%.

Nowadays women knows their right and not be accepted to be victim of bad marriage. Despite growing divorce rates, most married women remain suffers silently from mental, physical and emotional abuse because of financial constraints, stigma of divorce, future of her children. They accept emotional and physical divorce but not the legal part.

Potential Conflicts of Interest

None.

Competing Interest

None.

Sponsorship

None.

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