

## **An Assessment of the Magnitude of Divorce and Associated Factors in Selected Woredas of Illubabor and Buno Bedelle Zones, Oromia, Ethiopia**

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### **Abstract**

*Currently, the case of divorce is everywhere in the community and its magnitude is increasing at an alarming rate. The increasing rate of divorce negatively affects the wellbeing of the society, and therefore, its adverse effect would be reflected in the building of a strong nation/state. The main objective of this study was to assess the magnitude and associated factors of divorce in the selected Woredas located in Illubabor and Bunno Bedelle Zones. To carry out this study, a qualitative approach and secondary sources of data were employed. The data collected through interviews and secondary sources were analyzed by thematic analysis and descriptive methods. After analysis, the result showed the increasing rate of divorce cases from year to year. The major causal factors for divorce were found to be economic dependency rather than interdependency, lack of regular source of income to sustain a marriage, addictive behaviors (khat and alcohol), external pressure (from family and peer), poor preparation for marriage and intolerance of religious and interest differences. Since the case was worsening, the government should work cooperatively with civil societies on the root factors to minimize the rate of divorce.*

**Keywords:** *Divorce, Marriage, Family, Society, Ethiopia*

### **Introduction**

Society is the result of a family institution. Family is created through marriage, affiliations, and adoption. Marriage is one of how basic elements of society may be created (Ahalew & Martha, 2009). According to the Family Code of Ethiopia, a marriage shall be based on the free will of the spouses on the legal ground that guarantees the equality of spouses during the conclusion, duration, and dissolution of marriage. For a family to be created through marriage, there should be a union of man and woman (FDRE, 1995; Revised Family Code Proclamation No.213/2000, 2000). Once established, marriage becomes a special complementary relationship in which the state has tried to protect and maintain certain values like economic security, obligation, trust, fidelity, loyalty, affection, equality, personal autonomy (Adshade & Kaiser, 2008). However, there are times when spouses want to separate due to several factors.

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Several studies, from different angles, indicate that there are different factors for divorce. Some of these are bonds between spouses, economic problems; legal, social and moral constraints; and the spouses' relationship (Lamanna & Riedmann, 2003). Furthermore, infertility, absence of love, ignorance, poverty, religious differences, unemployment, and other individual behavior are the main factors (Olaniyi, 2015). There are also studies arguing that change in the culture of marriage and the weakening of the binding strength between spouses as factors of divorce (Olson & Detrain, 2006).

Much empirical evidence shows that there is a general increase in the rate of divorce worldwide though the proportion is higher in developed countries. African countries also manifested greater divorce trends throughout the twentieth century, perhaps the most important factor is the greater social acceptance of divorce (Adegoke, 2010). In Africa, going by the generally expressed rarity of divorce in most traditional settings, for instance, the current situation of conjugal closure among women is considered sociologically significant (Clark & Brauner, 2015). There is a fact that divorce is caused as a result of continued urbanization, and the influence of formal education in Sub-Saharan countries like Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique and Ethiopia, the rate of divorce is higher (Adegoke, 2010).

A study conducted by Tilson and Larsen (2006) posited that in South African, for instance, spouses pronounce divorce 1.5 out of 10 couples. The authors also revealed that in Ethiopia, 95% of women who did not have a child within their first marriage divorced within 20 years, 85% of these women divorce within the first 5 years of their first marriage (*Ibid.*). Except in 1994, population and housing census report, there is no statistical report that can show the trend about the actual divorce rate at the national and sub-national levels in Ethiopia.

Nevertheless, the increasing number of divorce in Ethiopia argued to be factors of both internal to the family and external. The reasons peculiar to the situation of the country are job displacement, economic crises, changing attitudes towards divorce, and to a lesser extent ethnic politics (Mokonnon *et al.*, 2019). The study on divorce in Ethiopia showed that the most common reasons women indicated, among the Amhara people in North Shewa province, were childlessness, physical abuse, maltreatment, and extravagancy of husbands, adultery, excessive control as well as a large difference in age (Tilson & Larsen, 2006). The causes for divorce from

the viewpoint of men were childlessness, adultery, incapability of house management and disobeying. The adverse effect of divorce on the spouses, their children and the community is significant. Divorce results in crises as it has psychological, economic and social impacts on the divorcees (Adegoke, 2010; Argaw, 2007). Those separated in divorce often found themselves in loss of hopes, loneliness, fear, and anxiety that might lead towards failure in their endeavors (Amato, 2012).

Most women in Ethiopia are housewives and invest in their marriage as homemakers. Argaw (2007) pointed out that 40% of women have no tangible property to retake during separation. Of those who have tangible property, many of them had only household goods. In the country where spousal support after separation is not secured, divorce results in great loss to economically weak spouse and children. In general, the adverse effect of divorce beyond the couple also affects the general community. Divorce is considered a decline in family life (Lamanna & Riedmann, 2003; Tilson & Larsen, 2006).

Noted from the above discussion, the magnitude, causal factors and its impact on couples, their children and the overall society, it appears that divorce is one of the significant elements of the disintegration of social fabrics that must be dealt with. From various study reports, the emphasis given from public and civil society to preserve marriage seems to be less. In most cases, the issue of divorce is seen as the concern of the couples, whereas its effect is beyond. This is the main rationale that motivated the researchers to assess the magnitude of divorce and associated causal factors in the real context of divorce in the study areas. In doing so, this article describes the prevalence of divorce, the current scenario about the issue and its impact in the study areas.

### **Methodology**

Based on the nature of the study topic, this research applied a qualitative approach. The same approach was adopted for data collections, data analysis and presentation in line with a descriptive case study design. The target population under this study was the separated couples or divorcees and their children, relatives and other members of the society affected by divorce.

For this study, the structural-functionalist theory was utilized to frame the sample on the assumption that most social phenomena have similar effects on the wider society. The sampling

was purposively framed to include elderly people from the community, religious leaders, and divorcees, relatives or close friends of divorcees, social experts and peoples in the legal machinery such as judges and court clients at the different levels of courts in the selected zones. Accordingly, key informants selected purposively were as follows.

**Table 1: Key Informants**

Study Areas		Participants						
Zones	Woredas	Religious Leaders	Elders	Divorcees	Legal Experts	Social Experts	Others	Sum
<i>Buno Bedelle</i>	Bedelle Municipality	6	4	10	2	1	2	25
<i>Illubabor Zone</i>	Bure	4	4	7	2	1	5	23
	Darimu	8	4	6	2	1	3	24
	Hurumu	3	4	9	2	2	4	24
	Mettu Municipality	6	4	8	2	1	3	24
<i>Total</i>		<i>27</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>120</i>

Purposive sampling technique was employed, as shown in Table 1 above, *via* separately clustering the administrative geographical location of urban and rural. Accordingly, Bedelle Municipality (urban) from Buno Bedelle Zone, and four Woredas, *i.e.* Mettu Municipality (urban), Hurumu, Bure, and Darimu from Illubabor Zone were selected to compare and contrast the prevalence of divorces in the rural and urban areas.

For this research, primary and secondary sources of data were employed. The primary sources included the empirical data gathered by an in-depth interview with key informants. To supplement the primary data, the researchers reviewed secondary sources such as legal documents, vital events registration agencies, reports from Women and Children Affairs Office, books and journal articles. The data were then analyzed using qualitative tools, thematically organized and descriptively presented. Moreover, the regional, national and international legal instruments along with previous research works were used to triangulate the field data and to support arguments throughout the discussion. The next section presents the data obtained from the field about divorce self-evident in the study area in line with existing literature on the topic. By so doing, the section emphasizes the magnitude of the problems, its causes and effects of divorce as well as their interrelationship.

## Results and Discussion

### The Magnitude of Divorce in Illubabor and Buno Bedelle Zones

Studies reveal that divorce is currently increasing at an alarming rate worldwide. According to the American Community Survey (2009), in the USA only, 47% of children reach age 17 in an intact married family. The same is true for Ethiopia as well for it has become common to hear cases of divorce everywhere. The data obtained from the first instance courts of sample woredas proved the same. In the study area, the magnitude of divorce is very shocking. In the woredas, on average, at least one divorce case appears before a court each day. The key informants from the woredas' first instance courts indicated that the magnitude of the problem has reached the level of risking the very foundation of the community itself. The problem is visible as it is putting the highest pressure on the well-being of the community, whereas the attention given by the community and concerned government bodies has remained minuscule. The available figures obtained from five first instance courts from sample woredas revealed the disparity among the woredas.

**Table 2: Divorce Cases in each Woreda in the Year 2010<sup>1</sup>**

Cases	Mettu	Bedelle	Hurumu	Bure	Darimu	Total
Number of Divorce	291	385	106	163	134	1079
Number of Marriage	1112	1153	985	899	898	5047
Rate of Divorce in Woreda (%)	26.16	33.39	10.76	18.13	14.92	21.37
Woreda's Share out Total	26.96	35.68	9.82	15.1	12.41	100

*Source:* Data Obtained from Each Woreda's First Instance Court, 2010 E.C.

As indicated in Table 2 above, divorce cases presented for adjudication in the sample woredas exhibit some variation. According to the latest data of 2010E.C. from the above five sample woredas, Bedelle stands first covering 35.68% of the total cases of divorce. However, the data indicate that out of 385 cases of divorce in Bedelle, first instance court only 205 cases were adjudicated while the remaining 180 cases of divorce interrupted for different reasons.

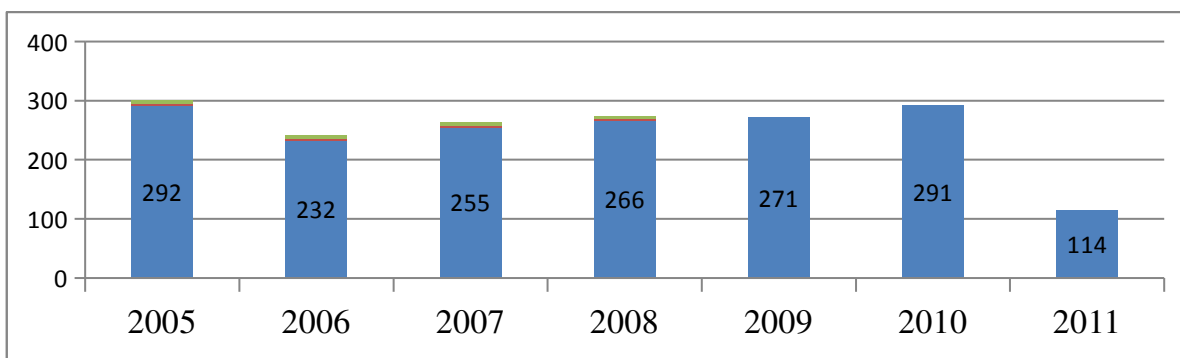
Mettu Woreda shares 26.96% of divorce cases from the sample woredas followed by Bure (15.1), Darimu (12.41%) and Hurumu (9.82%). From the total number of 5047 couples in five woredas (districts), 1079 divorce cases were presented to the court, which was 21.37%. The data

<sup>1</sup> Note that the years used in this data and the analyses thereof are mentioned according to the Ethiopian (Ge'ez) Calendar (E.C.). The 2010 in Fiscal Year in E.C. covers a period from 6 July, 2017 to 30 June, 2018 G.C.

revealed that the level of urbanization directly related to the extent of divorce. The figure shows that Bedelle and Mettu were among the highest whereas Hurumu and Darimu were among the lowest in terms of divorce cases presented to the court in 2010. In the same vein, in terms of urbanization, Mettu and Bedelle come in the front line while probably followed by Bure, Darimu, and Hurumu. Both Mettu and Bedelle, among other things due to their superiority in urbanization, are currently serving as a seat of zonal administration. From a total of 1079 divorce cases presented for the courts of sample woredas, Mettu and Bedelle share 676 or 62.65% of the total cases reported. From table 2, one can easily understand that the magnitude of divorce in the study area was among the highest. Based on the same data, it appears that on average, each first instance court in the sample woredas needs to deal with 215.8 cases of divorce in the 2010 Ethiopian fiscal year.

The prevalence of divorce as a social phenomenon may vary not only from place to place but also from time to time. Accordingly, as we have just indicated cases of divorce in the five selected woredas above, we found that it is important to deal with cases of divorce across the years. For this purpose, we objectively selected Mettu’s first instance court to trace back the development of this phenomenon across the years. In this regard, we attempted to gather cases of divorce presented to the first instance courts of Mettu Woreda in the last six years. We have also attempted to incorporate the latest data of the 2011E.C first-quarter reports. The following chart presents cases of divorce presented to Mettu Woreda first instance court from 2005E.C up to December 2011E.C as obtained from record and archival officer.

**Figure 1: Cases of Divorce in Mettu Woreda (2005-2011E.C.)**



*Source:* Mettu Woreda First Instance Court Record and Archival Office, 2011E.C.

The data presented in Figure 1 above revealed that the problem of divorce is not something incidental for a given year, rather a persistent challenge across years. From 2005 up to 2010, the

magnitude of divorce cases is more or less similar except for variation between 2005 and 2006. The highest divorce cases were registered in 2005 which is 292 and the lowest is 2006 which is 232, the difference being 60 cases. The numbers indicate that there was almost a constant increase from 2007 to 2010. The data obtained in the first quarter of 2011 also revealed the same pattern of increase as the number of cases equivalent to half of 2010 was already reported within four months of the 2011 budget year.

### **Factors Associated with Divorce in Illubabor and Buno Bedelle Zones**

The responses from participants revealed that there were different reasons for the initiation of divorce in their marriage. However, it is very difficult to have a complete list of the causes of divorce. In the study area, among the causes, husband addiction (to alcohol and chat) and infidelity contributed to the larger share. The addictive behavior also exacerbates other causes of divorce, more particularly the economy of the spouses. Thus, economic factors as causes of divorce can be treated both as dependent and independent variables. This, in turn, affects the health conditions of the family as the economy determines the diet and the standard of medical treatment. On top of these, health problem related to women infertility has its root in the community as causes of divorce. Besides, pressure/interference from friends and families has also been reported as causes of divorce in the study area. Generally, for the sake of convenience, we can discuss the causes of divorce under two broad categories: economic and social factors.

#### ***Economic Factors***

The economic factor amounted to the dissolution of a marriage between spouses. According to the key informants, comprised of legal and social experts, economic factors lead to divorces in three different ways. Firstly, budget deficit contributed a lot to the dissolution of marriage. This has especially happened in our study area when couples get married based on their temporal conditions such as seasonal income without having enough income sources that can sustain them together. On such occasions, the male partner often leaves home letting the female partner alone thereby motivating her to finally terminate the marriage due to lack of income and get back to her parents.

Secondly, high seasonal income, especially in the aftermath of harvest, also led to the dissolution of marriage in the study areas. This experience is common particularly for male partners who can

generate excess temporal income resulting in an addiction to different ill social behaviors such as khat/chat chewing and alcoholism. It is such behaviors that often precipitate the development of mistrust between spouses and finally lead to marriage termination. For instance, alcoholism pronounced disagreements among partners and their parents. Lastly, the income difference between spouses contributed to divorce as an economic factor. While pointing out other economic dimensions of divorce, elders informed that there are instances when female partners initiate divorce as a means of sharing the husband's resources.

The study also found out that marriage concluded among couples who are dependent on their families' economic resources in a time of marriage are more exposed to divorce. On top of this, disparities among the two families in terms of economic status also found to be another cause of divorce in the study area. The economic difference often exposed couples to different styles of life in their respective home. In some cases, newly married couples wanted to maintain the previous ways of life in the new one, thereby creating disagreement finally leading to the dissolution of the marriage. Thus, as "money makes right" and the economy determines the basic aspects of human life, economic factors seem to be taking a lion's share in the dissolution of marriage in the study area.

### ***Social Factors***

In the study area, just like other parts of Ethiopia, marriage is not a mere union of two individuals. The two spouses enter into marriage with all their previous interactions and relationships with their families and relatives. Some families continue to deeply engage in the life of their children even after marriage. This is well explained by most of the interviewees comprised of divorcees as their family started managing them even after the wedding. They pointed out that marriage which is highly interconnected with relatives is prone to divorce. If the spouse fails to manage the interference of their families, relatives, neighbors, and friends on private matters, the marriage might end up in divorce.

Diversity in terms of religion, ethnicity, culture and social status between the families of the two spouses also contributed to the dissolution of marriage. Elders further informed that newly married couples often suffer from the inability to manage diversity. The study has shown that marriages between two distinct cultures have a higher probability of dissolution than marriages



within the same culture. In the study area, religion as part of culture also played a significant role both in unloosing or losing the marriage ties. A marriage concluded within the members of the same religion has a higher probability to remain intact than marriage among members of a different religion. Therefore, social factors and diversities among couples and/or their families contributed to the dissolution of marriage.

Participants comprised of religious leaders and divorcees also underscored that infidelity has become a cause for the dissolution of their marriage. According to one of the religious leaders, misinformation to spouses by neighbors and relatives also caused divorce by producing mistrust and betrayal among couples. This disruption of normal family life has finally led to divorce and personal demoralization. Legal experts further strengthened the above discussion indicating that, besides factors such as addiction, husbands' engagements in gambling and bigamy are also among the principal causes of divorce in the study area. Bigamy often led to the deterioration of marriage life by reducing the frequency of contact between husbands and one of the two spouses that might be accompanied by abusing her physically, resulting in the termination of marriages.

### **The Effects of Divorce in Illubabor and Buno Bedelle Zones**

The effect of divorce in a given society ranges from mild to severe, from seemingly small to observably significant, and from short-term to long-term. The degree of the effect varies from person to person as well as from community to community among others mainly due to socio-economic conditions and the inability to deal with difficulties. There is no way to predict how any particular person will be affected by divorce, nor to what extent. Yet, it is not impossible to predict the societal effects of divorce and how this large cohort of divorcees and children will be affected as a group. These effects are both numerous and serious.

#### ***Effects on Divorcees***

The participants were asked about the social impacts of divorce they experienced after the marriage was concluded by separating the spouses either legally or culturally. The informants indicated that their condition especially that immediately follows the divorce is much difficult to describe. The community by whatever means attempts to invalidate the decision arrived by the spouses. No matter what the decision is made by a formal court or any customary institution, divorce by itself is regarded as violating the norms of the community. Due to this fact, divorce

usually, if not always, followed with some degree of rejection from the community. The stories of interviewed women revealed the same fact. However, in most cases, the community is paradoxically very friendly with the divorced ones and attempts to fill the gap created due to the divorce arrangement. Thus, divorce resulted in two different situations to female and male, hostile environment to women and pitying heart towards the male.

The interview with one of the divorced women illustrates this fact:

*Divorce to me is not a mere separation of husband and wife. I have got divorced not only from my ex-husband but also from my children, family, neighbor and the community at large. Due to my economic status, I was forced to give up my children, relations with my neighbors also interrupted, some members of the community considered me as the only cause for the breakup of the marriage and even my families regarded me as incapable of shouldering the responsibilities of marriage. On the contrary, the community and the nearby neighbors, in particular, show a pitying heart to my ex-husband and they attempt to support him in all his difficulties. Putting aside the rest, even if you assume both of us responsible for the breakup of the marriage, we are receiving different treatments from the community. In our community, the social sanction differs when it applies to females and males [Translated to English by the Authors].*

In most cases, isolation is used as a social sanction by the community to punish divorcees. The isolation begins from the divorcee women themselves. Following the dissolution of the marriage, most women begin to retreat from their previous social responsibilities. The community members consider them incapable of shouldering social responsibility as they dissolved marriage, the first and basic social institution. As a result, divorced women face the fate of social exclusion from their married friends intending to prevent the further dissolution of marriage. This is because the community believes that divorcees spread their inappropriate behavior to other women who are living by respecting their marriage and family. Several interviewees reported that they lost many of their friends because of divorcees. Many of them were also unwilling to stay in contact with their friends.

In this regard, one of the interviewees remembered the time of her separation as follows:

*The next day after the divorce took place, I noticed something unpleasant on the faces of my friends and neighbors. I used to observe them frequently discussing something and they often quit it or minimize their voice or keep silent altogether every time I visit them. Then, I realized that I was the point of discussion. Some women also talk to me by exaggerating the situation. Some others also try to give me unusual care which I have never seen before. Activities like this became a source of anxiety that fuelled the process of divorce. Due to this, I started to isolate myself from my previous friends including some of my family and relatives [Translated to English by the Authors].*

Although divorced spouses are paying back due to these social sanctions, interviewed elders in the study area took the position that the social sanction is no longer working due to the ‘defunct elements of modernity.’ According to one of our elder informants, who stayed for 43 years in marriage, the main cause for the widespread of divorce is the erosion of social values. He goes on to say:

*During our time, marriage is a respected social institution for the sake of God, law and the community. Divorce is socially denounced in the eyes of the community and also believed to be sinful before God. Even, the legal system attempts to keep the marriage intact. But as time goes by, we reached on your defunct modernity. Now, the new generation of yours, in the name of freedoms and personal rights, came to regard marriage just like a theatre. Instead of putting sanctions on the divorcees, the community entertains from the theatre of divorce arrangements for free. The community, religious leaders and the legal system shifted their role from protecting marriage towards serving as a platform for divorce arrangements. As a result, there are cases in which you can hear the news of divorce arrangement ahead of the wedding ceremony [Translated to English by the Authors].*

### ***Effects on Children***

When parents get divorced, another sort of divorce occurs between the parents and their children. The data revealed that in the study area alone each year over 1700 children are subject to sufferings due to the divorce of their parents. In most cases, when the marriage is concluded with divorce either through legal court or traditional means, the children are required to opt for one of their parents. According to key informants from the judicial bodies in the sample woredas, there are also cases whereby the children were put under guardians separating them from both parents. In a situation where the woman spouses are not economically independent, divorce imposes even a bigger challenge on the children. According to legal experts, during divorce, children are guaranteed the right to choose from either of the parents to live with. In most cases, children preferred their mother to live with. However, in the study area, the male partner is considered as a breadwinner and the woman partner is a home keeper reducing woman’s role only to reproductive activities, while the male participates in productive activities. Even if women are engaged in more challenging and demanding activities, their work is not considered as valuable. This unfair division of labor has made women economically subordinate to men. As a result, when children choose their mother, the burden goes to her, while the economic resource remains with the male partner.

To overcome this effect, the court or any third party involved in the process of a divorce tries to convince the male partner to share some of his income in the form of compensation or service charge in upbringing the children. However, according to our key informants, deciding the issue is not as such an easy task. This is mainly because most of the people in the study area are farmers. They do not have a fixed amount of monthly or yearly income. Besides, the means of implementing the decision is also very difficult. For instance, if any person who has a monthly salary engages in some kind of divorce arrangement, the court could make a decision that directs a portion of the ex-husband's monthly salary to the mother for the maintenance of children and this can be enforced by a simple court order to the employer. Yet, lack of clear mechanism of managing such problems has made divorcee women suffer even more than others when the male partner is a farmer or a daily laborer.

The aforementioned economic problems of the mothers are responsible factors in deciding the future fate of the children. The interview result conducted with social affairs officers in the woredas showed that if the child opts for a mother with a reasonable income, the future of the child is somewhat predictable. Having or not having a source of earning or income has affected health, education, diet, psychology, behavior and so on. Its effects are observable on children's body and mind, and it may range from mild to severe, from seemingly small to observably significant, and from short-term to long-term. It may cause short-lived or enduring troubles in the children's quality of life. The fact that the future of the child is highly dependent on the care received during childhood, divorce puts someone on a descending path from which he/she might never fully recover. This long-lasting effect of divorce on the life of children has been well noted from the discussion we held with officers of social affairs in the sample Woredas.

The data reveal that the number of children who need the support of the government is increasing from time to time. Among those children, the majority are exposed to such problems as a result of the breakup of a marriage. Different studies, such as Xie *et al.* (2019), show that the support that children with divorced families receive from home is rated much lower than children from intact homes, and these negative ratings become more pronounced by the time children are in high school and college.

Education prepares children for future requirements. However, children who suffer from the stick of divorce may have no, little or disrupted education. Divorce diminishes children's

learning capacity and educational attainment. As a result, they may lack the necessary knowledge, attitudes, and skills to socialize as well as to lead their life independently. Thus, divorce reduces children's future know-how in all five of the society's major tasks or institutions: family, school, religion, marketplace, and government. As key informants indicated, the family is a place in which we can start to exercise our future responsibilities and divorce takes away this fertile field letting the children on the street to harvest behaviors that are against the norms of the community. The representative of structural-functional theory, Parsons and Bales (1955) argued that one of the basic functions of the family is to serve as a stable, organically integrated "factory" in which human personalities are formed. Similarly, social learning theory emphasizes the importance of role models, focusing on parents as the initial and primary cultivators of child behavior (Bandura & Walters, 1963).

To sum up, although the effects of divorce on the divorcees, relatives, neighbors and community at large differ, there is no doubt that divorce imposes severe harm to children. These effects are both numerous and serious particularly when they are accompanied by a poorly functioning economy both at an individual, family, community and/or national levels.

### *Effects on Community at Large*

The separation of couples affects the community in different ways. The effects of divorce in society can be both concrete and insubstantial. Some of the effects of divorce on the community are easily noticeable, while others remain invisible unless examined critically. As the first and the basic unit of the community, any threat against the wellbeing of the family is directly related to the community at large. The stable community can only be built if there is a stable family. The healthy functioning of other parts of society is also determined by the extent to which the family performs its social responsibilities. Morally good people are brought up in a morally good family. Divorce negatively hurts the norms and values of the community as it results in the rampancy of ill social behaviors such as sex trade and prostitution. Even, religious values are well-practiced in a stable family than others. Marriage dissolution diminishes the frequency of worship and recourse to prayer.

In terms of education, divorce diminishes children's learning capacity and educational attainment. As far as the economic aspect is concerned, divorce reduces household income and

cuts individual earning capacity. The inability to pay further affects children's health, which in turn increases behavioral, emotional and psychiatric risks that may, sometimes, lead to suicide. Divorce allows the divorcee male partner to look for sex with more women after the divorce which in turn affects the health status of the male partner and his life expectancy by exposing him to sexually transmitted diseases. Generally, divorce imposes significant effects on the overall aspects of the community by increasing crime, abuse and neglect, drug use, and the costs of compensating government services. The community suffers from these problems directly by becoming a victim of the crime and immoral acts or by mobilizing resources to handle the problem and its consequences.

The separation of couples consumes social and human capital. Family as the basic social institution is expected to provide practical experience for future roles. Social values, such as sympathy, caring for others, supporting each other, coaching and supervising behavior, cooperation and tolerance are learned in the family. Divorce obliterates this opportunity for married couples and their offspring.

Divorce also impacts human capital in various ways. It undercuts the productive capacity of the divorcees. Temporarily, the couples may be preoccupied with issues related to divorce instead of their actual business. Divorce arrangement needs a prolonged discussion and dialogue. This discourse consumes time, resource and energy. Therefore, the human capital that is expected to contribute to society's improvement will be found dealing with matters related to divorce. On the other hand, the community's future human capital is supposed to be produced in the family. Family can be treated as a source from which the community can extract the human capital that is important to realize societal endeavors and responsibilities. However, divorce negatively affects this role of the family in two important ways: first, by undercutting the fertility rate of the family thereby reducing the number of children, and second, by disturbing the upbringing of children to fit future demands of the community and societal expectations.

The study also revealed that divorce overburdens society as a significant number of children are found to be orphans after any kind of divorce arrangement. The community provides institutional protection for its members. As part of this responsibility, it becomes mandatory for the community to take care of these children. In the study area, governmental institutions as formal bodies of the community are trying to cope with these problems.

However, the magnitude of the problem has undermined their efforts. In addition to governmental institutions, the community is also dealing with the problem directly. As a result, the economic resources which may be used to alleviate certain societal problems are used to support orphans. This condition overburdens the society into two important ways: by increasing the cost to the taxpayer and diminishing the taxpaying portion of society. In general, the study showed that divorce diminishes children's future competence which in turn profoundly affects the social fabric of the community.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The results of this study showed that the rate of divorce was increasing with 21.37% concerning marriage conducted within five woredas/districts. They also vary among woredas/districts based on their geographical locations of urban and rural. They showed that the rate of divorce was high at zonal towns and surroundings than rural towns. For instance, from this study, the rate of divorce in the two zonal towns of Bedelle and Mettu in the year 2010E.C was 385 (35.68%) and 291 (26.96%) respectively. They were high in rate while compared with rural woredas of Bure 163 (15.1%), Darimu 135 (12.41%), and Hurumu 106 (9.82%). To show the changing rate of divorce from year to year, Mettu town was purposively selected to indicate the variations. Accordingly, the data obtained from documents or the cases presented to the court back to six years in the Ethiopian calendar showed that there has been a continuously increasing trend from 2005E.C. to 2011E.C., which indicated that the community is in danger. From the data obtained from the documents or cases presented to the court and interview, the study found out that the factors associated with divorce are primarily economic. Some of these were addictive behavior of husband by khat/chat and alcohol, unemployment of wife, lack of secured sources of income to sustain the marriage and facing divorce at early marriage. The second falls under social factors, such as the difference in religion, interference by family or relatives and infidelity of the married partner. This study, furthermore, pointed out that divorce has the consequence of divorcees, social adjustment, children's wellbeing and the community at large.

Based on the findings, the researchers forwarded six points of recommendation. First, the religious institutions collaborating with the social sectors of the government should work towards minimizing the triggering factors or root causes which may lead to divorce. Second, the government should consider the age groups, and the partners should think about the sources of

their income before entering into marriage. To do so, the civil societies and the government should collaborate to plan and work on teaching about ‘what and how’ of the marriage life. Third, the couples should get lessons formally or informally concerning the value of marriage for the family, children, community and healthy social life. Fourth, social institutions, government bodies, and civil society should work on awareness for marriage plans or in a relationship on resisting pressure from family or any other sources. Fifth, as a policy issue, the liberal approach of the family code or law concerning its openness for divorce should be reviewed. Finally, it is recommended that family education should be incorporated into the curriculum to properly nurture youngsters.

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