# FAMILY DISASSEMBLY AND ITS CONSEQUENCES:

# A STUDY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CHILDREN IN YEMEN [1]

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**Abstract:**

This paper focuses on the family disassembly and its impact on children, family and society in Sana'a City, the capital of Yemen. It sociologically investigates the causes and factors leading to the family disassembly from the perspective of children, and the impacts of family disassembly on the children, on the family itself and on the society at large.

## I.    Introduction: On Family Disassembly, Factors and Effects

This section of the paper deals with the explanation of the concept and definition of family disassembly followed in this study. The section consists of the elaboration of an operational definition of family disassembly, and the effects and factors that affect it.

Social Scientists studied and discussed various aspects of family. They observe that children, family and society are affected deeply by the family disassembly if it occurs. Although the disassembly has many wide-meanings in different forms such as 'family unity collapse' and the weakness of its loyalty, the lack of understanding and the agreement of people's opinions and thoughts; the end of marriage relationship and the disjoining of parents and children, but in fact it is the lack of parents' supervision and his/her position or both and the spread of the false and negative education and the moral degradation in the family. The case of divorce and abandonment between parents may lead to the disorder of relationships inside the family, thus being unable to provide their children with high social principles and advice and this pushes them gradually to madness (Alzuabi, 1997:136).

Many scholars of social sciences see the family disassembly as something that also has a direct relation/ contact with crime. For example the dispute or separation between parents may result in negative impact on their children, so the children may have no stability and feel insecure, especially when it comes to "choice" to live with one of their parents.

They also grow up in an environment with no peace and comfort, but full of fear and insecurity and instability, owing to the family disassembly. As a result of this, the children start seeking different ways to meet their sentiments, desires and comforts, and often resort to illegal activities to fulfill those needs. However, this comfort is a temporary one, and they may have tension in their lives and   become victims and also get spoiled by criminals who commit various crimes against society and humanity.

There are some declined /corrupt families that bring up their children with the principle aim at deviation and violating laws, which become an integral part of their own culture and conventions as well. Crimes of vengeance, drug users and smuggling are clear and strong examples of the negative impact of such bad upbringing (Alsate, 2005:115).

### 1.1.    The Concept of Family Disassembly

There are several definitions of family disassembly, studied from various aspects. If we look at these definitions, we would find them common of one thing that it describes the state of non-stability of family and its inability to perform its roles properly. The most important definition is that of a sociologist ,William J. Goode's, that the family disassembly is a phenomenon where the family is not able to perform the main obligations to its members due to some problem such as the death of one or both parents, abandonment or divorce between the espouses'. It is the family where there are no tightly-fixed emotional relationships between the husband and wife due to the lack of the attraction to each other. However, the family would remain intact because of the parents' intention to prevent children from being astray and also because the parents do not have the determination of releasing negative terms, then the family collapse and disassembly (Alrabiyee, 2006:116-117).

## 1.2.    The Operational Definition of Family Disassembly:

The researchers see family disassembly as a fault in building the family and the lack of performance of unification of its members' roles. It leads to the tension in the social interaction and relationship between the spouses, thus resulting from the cases of disassociation e.g. divorce, abandonment, imprisonment, death or illness or in the cases of polygamy in a way to prevent the family from performing the roles of solidarity and stability among its members.

Operational Definition of Family Disassembly thus includes only those families which have only one parent and his/her children.

**1.3. The Factors that Affect the Family:** There are a number of social, Psychological, economic and cultural factors that directly or indirectly affect the family. These factors lead to some family problems that shake its stability (Alhasan, 1986:174). The most outstanding factors are:

 **(1). The Social Factors:** Some of these factors contribute in weakening the family and this subsequently causes the family breakdown. The social problems are directly reflected in the relationship within the family, leading to disturb the marriage relationships. This leads to the in clarity of the wife's and husband's roles, and to the feeling of depression, hopelessness and failure, anger, quarrels (Altal and others, 2001:22).

The family problems sometimes take place due to external events like: the compulsory temporal or permanent absence of one of the couples because of death, prison, or any other circumstances like wars or floods (Alkhawli, 1984:257).

**(2).The Economic Factors: (**Alkhashab, 1982:142) refers to the significance of the economic resources in the family life. He thinks that the lack of these resources makes the family unable to play its role and subsequently leads to the family disassembly.

Many of the researches showed that most of the problems that lead to social problems are those which are related to the economic circumstances of the family. The family's lack of its essential requirements sometimes creates a kind of tension and a conflict between the parents within the family. This can be a reason for weakening the husband's role and position, thus this leads to tension between the husband and wife and sometimes divorce takes place. On the other hand, some studies show that woman's work outside home is no longer improve the family incomes and decreasing its problems. But, it sometimes creates problems between the couples (Ahmed, 1981:132-133). Because the wife's economic independence motivates her to disobey him especially if she is working and the husband is not. The situation is worse when the husband feels that he no longer has the traditional power of the family (Alhasan, 1986:73).

**(3).The Psychological Factors:** One of the most important functions of the family is the emotional satisfaction for its members. The individual needs the feeling of security and respect. These are psychological needs that cannot be satisfied except through the groups to which an individual belongs. The family is on the top of these groups (Aljamili, 1993:36). For this reason, the family disassembly resulted when any of the couples cannot satisfy the other's emotional desire or when there are psychological disorders with one of the marriage partners or one of them or both feel unsatisfied in this marriage relation (Alsanhory and others, 1991:56).

**(4). The Health Factors:** When one of family members is exposed to an illness, the whole family gets disturbed especially if he/she suffers from a chronic disease. The family is more disturbed if the family guardian feels sick because the income of the family is sometimes stopped or decreased and subsequently the family's requirements are not longer met. In this case, the wife has to work, leaving the children without sufficient care. The guardian may not be able to bear the difficulties of the disease because of his/her feeling of the family responsibilities; he may get the

feeling of depression and surrender. He may be so sensitive, causing a lot of problems and disturbance for the family (Alsadiqi, 2003:22).

**(5).The Religious Factors:** Psychologists in modern trends call for the significance of religion to treat psychological disorders. These trends think that the faith in Allah supplies the man with spiritual power, enabling him to bear the life difficulties and prevent him from worries that many people suffer nowadays. The faith weakness is considered one of the family-disassembly reasons. This factor was supposed to be the most significant reason for its importance and the unpredictability of many sociologists and psychologist for it. If the husband's or the wife's faith is weak, it would be easy for any of them to commit sins that lead to a number of family problems (Algabere and others, 2001:85).  This may lead to family infidelity and this weakens the family ties and may lead the family disassembly.

### 1.4.   The Effects of Family Disassembly

a. **The effect of family disassembly on family:** Individuals are victims of family disassembly in the broken family. When facing many problems, the couple will have frustration and disappointment and mal-adjustment and psychiatric health. This may expose them to some psychiatric diseases such as anxiety, depression, hallucination, obsession and illness fears (Turkiyah, 2004:176).

b. **Effect of family disassembly on children:**   The family is the first seed of the society. It is the first social system that embraces the child as soon as he/she sees the light of life and the first impact the new-born baby is subject to. On the basis of the family, the child grows up his personality and stances towards society. The person would be normal and right if the family was sound and be not normal if the family was not sound (Rashwan, 2010: 199).

Providing the emotional stability for the child within the family and building the family on the basis of intimacy and sympathy and infusing these noble principles will enable the family to be more successful in creating sound people and generations with ideal upbringing (Ahmed, 1999:189).

c. **Effect of family disassembly on society:**  There are reaction and interaction between family and society; whenever the family is weak, the society becomes weak. The development of

society depends largely on the development of different families which make the whole social structure (Alzaini, 1988:96).

Family disassembly has an effect on the society. The sociologists and sociology organizers come to the conclusion that to identify the situation of any society, the family is a mirror that reflects the situation of that society; this is what makes many of cultural anthropologists use the family as a unit to study the society. Family with no doubt reflects and obviously displays the economic, social and cultural situation of the society in the sense that any change in society's performance can be seen through the family and vice versa. Hence, the social, cultural and media policies tend to identify the structure and properties of family as a way to study the social change and to know its effects on the family individuals (Obaid, 2007: 3).

## II.     Methodology:

This section is about the methodological details of the study. The Area of study, the universe or the samples used for the study, the methods of data collection, and the methods of data analysis are explained in this section.

### 2.1. Area of study

The study has been conducted in one city, namely Sana'a, the capital of Yemen. This city has attracted most people from different parts of the country to work and live in. Moreover, it was easier to get the study sample because of the facilities of offices situated here and cases in good number were available there.

### 2.2. Universe/ Sample:

All families which are considered cases of family disassembly i.e. of single parent in Sana'a city (Yemen) constitute the universe of the study. According to the 2008 census, Sana'a city consists of 301,370 families. The exact number of single parent families was not known but the Social Mission (Government of Yemen in Sana'a city) maintains some records. The exact total was not exactly available but may be in few thousand. The sample would consist of 100 families from Sana'a city. Thus considering a reasonable number for analysis the sample of 100 such single parent families have been selected randomly from the official registration book of the three

organization of The Social Mission in Sana'a. The Social Mission includes three Institutional offices: (i) Social Care House for Boys, (ii) The House of Orphans Care, (iii) Court of South-West secretariat.

From the Social Care House for Boys, 20 children out of 90 Children were selected in the sample. From the House of Orphans, 30 children out of 140 Children were selected. The other 50 cases were selected from the Court of South-West Secretariat, where 235 children/families were available.

Thus, the total sample consists of 100 families (i.e. 100 Single families and 100 children from them). From these families 100 single parents were selected and 100 children (one from each family) were also selected.

The researcher has made deeper case studies of 10 children/families from the city. These case studies were taken from different places. Of these case studies, 5 were taken from Court of South-West secretariat, 3 cases from the House of Orphans Care and 2 cases from the Social Care House for Boys.

### 2.3. Methods of data collection

Data has been collected by using the techniques of interview, documents, and observation. At first the details of aspects were gathered by using case study method. Ten case studies were done. Thus exploration provided help in preparing an interview guide for parents and children separately. At the second stage, data from 100 families (100 parents and 100 children) have been collected by using the interview guide.

### 2.4. Methods of data analysis

The facts, collected through different sources have been analyzed scientifically in a systematic manner. Case studies have been analyzed qualitatively. All the data collected by using interview guide/schedule (s) were analyzed by using simple statistical techniques, classifying variables of back ground, causes and effects. Such techniques have helped in arriving at findings on the proposed objectives.

### III.     Data and Findings

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The data of the study have been collected from 100 families (100 parents and 100 children), but the present paper includes 100 Children only. Thus, the findings of the study would be from the perspective of Children only. The findings have been divided into; (1) Personal Characteristics of Children (2) Family Disassembly from Children's Perspective (3) Impact of Family Disassembly on Children from Children's Perspective (4) Impact of Family Disassembly on Family itself from Children's Perspective, and (5) Impact of Family Disassembly on Society from Children's Perspective.

## 1.    Personal Characteristics of Children

- Majority (57%) of children are male.

- Larger number (43%) of children belongs to the age group of 10-13 years i.e. middle age group.

- Majority (76%) of children are educated up to the primary level of education.

- A segment (30%) of children's fathers are educated up to secondary level of education while others are less educated.

- A bout one third (31%) of children's mothers are illiterate.

- Majority (64%) of fathers of the children are government employees and nongovernmental organizations.

- A bout half (51%) of mothers of children are housewives.

- Large segment (37%) of children have number of brothers and sisters (4-6).

- Large segment (45%) of children in the seniority group is first among brothers and sisters.

- Large majority (85%) of children are studying, a small number (15%) are not studying.

- A small number (12%) of children (who are not studying) work for financial support of their families.

## 2.    Family Disassembly and Social Problems: From Children's Perspective

- A segment (29%) of children feels that their parents had arguments in their presence.

- Large segment (35%) of children has a feeling of fear and anxiety after quarrels of parents.

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- Large majority (81%) of children assert that their fathers not beat their mothers.

- The majority (70%) of children attribute the family disassembly to divorce between father and mother.

- Large number (45%) of children knows that their fathers got remarried after divorcing their mothers.

-  Majority (60%) of children know that their mothers did not get remarried after divorce.

**3.    Impact of Family Disassembly on Children: A Children's Perspective**

- Large segment (35%) of children shows that other single parents (if alive) sometimes visit them.

- Large segment (37%) of children has a feeling of deprivation in the absence of their other parent.

- Larger number (42%) of children feels that society looks on them with sympathy and respect.

- Larger number (46%) of children gets help from their guardians in solving their problems.

- Majority (67%) of children has never left home, only a small number (33%) left home.

- A small number (15%) of children has, in the case of yes, left their home for the period of nearly one month, and then they came back.

- A small number (15%) of children attributes leaving their homes because of friends' influence.

- A small number (14%) of children says that their mothers take care of them.

- A small number (15%) of children receives a bad treatment while they are absent from home, particularly those left home for some time.

- Larger number (48%) of children never chews qat.

- Majority (63%) of children feel that they are not laughed at or teased by friends.

**4.    Impact of Family Disassembly on Family Itself: Remarks from the Children's Perspective**

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- Large number (42%) of children stays with mothers only.

- Large segment (39%) of children has insecure relation with their single parents.

- Large segment (39%) of children feel that they are dealt with carelessness by single parents.

- Large segment (44%) of children sometimes gets daily pocket money from single parents.

- Larger number (45%) of children gets normal follow-ups from single parents on studies and other works.

- Large segment (34%) of children gets punishment by their single parents as a response for being back home late.

- Majority (77%) of children have the feeling of love and respect towards their custodians/guardians.

**5.       Impact of Family Disassembly on Society: From Children's Perspective**

- Majority (60%) of children expresses their respect towards the society, and the lowest number of them (15%) formed up the behavior of rebellion against society's values.

- Majority (74%) of children have not been arrested by the police as they did not get involve in any crime, some got (26%)

- Large segment (38%) of those children, who have been arrested by the police, have been caught in act of robbery.etc.

- Larger number (44%) of children sometimes visits their relatives.

**IV.    Summing up and Conclusion**

This sociological study on 'family disassembly' as it is manifested in the capital city of Republic of Yemen, Sana'a, has followed some crucial questions pertaining the children of the affected families, the families in general and the society at large. The questions are as follows:

1. What are the causes and factors that lead to the family disassembly?

2. What are the impacts of family disassembly on children?

3. What are the impacts of family disassembly on family itself?

4. What are the impacts of family disassembly on society at large?

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5. What may be the suggestions i.e. what can be the suitable ways (recommendations) that may help to check this phenomenon?

The study in general has brought out some important and critical points about the state of family disassembly and the nature of experience of it for the children. Based on the facts collected the study has arrived at particular conclusions from the children's perspective. The conclusions and suggestions are summarized below:

1. <u>Personal Characteristics of Children</u>: It shows the majority (57%) of children are male, and a considerable number (43%) of them belongs to the age group of 10-13 years. And a big majority (76%) of children is educated up to the primary level of education. The children's state should be viewed in connection with the socio economic profile of their parents. Only a segment (30%) of children's fathers are educated up to secondary level of education while about one third (31%) of children's mothers are illiterate. Majority (64%) of fathers of the children are employees under either government or NGOs, but about half (51%) of the mothers is found as housewives. Large segment (37%) of children have number of siblings (4-6).Large segment (45%) of children are first among their siblings. Large majority (85%) of children are studying, and a small number (12%) of children (who are not studying) work to support their families.

2. <u>Family Disassembly and Social Problems</u>: A segment (29%) of children feels that their parents had tough arguments in their presence, and further, a large segment (35%) of children has the feeling of fear and anxiety after quarrels of parents. But, interestingly, and for the good of social stability, a notable majority (81%) of children pointed that their fathers do not beat their mothers. One of the hard issues that can be met at practical level is a sad acknowledgment of the children about the root of the problem. Majority (70%) of them attribute the family disassembly to divorce between father and mother. Another fact is that there is a clear gender disparity in the occurrence of remarriage to cope up with such a sense has several psychological, social and economic implications on the lives of the children. Many (45%) children know that their fathers got remarried after divorcing their mothers. On the other hand, a large section (60%) of children knows that their mothers did not get remarried after divorce. Measures to be taken by the state and family welfare authorities to control the mounting level of divorce rate would be a solution to the increasing disassembly in the

Yemeni society in general and Sana'a city in particular. Introduction of more and effective dispute settling agencies of government and other, constructive intervention of the media into the issue, more human court settlements, and promotion of governmental as well as non-governmental family awareness programmes could be considered in this regard.

3. <u>Impact of Family Disassembly on Children:</u> It is of critical social-psychological consequences that feeling of deprivation in the absence of their other parent is high among children, as a large segment (37%) of them states so. It is to be noted in relation with that larger number (46%) of children seek and gets help from their guardians in solving their problems. Feeling for home and its safety and protection stand still high as majority (67%) of children has never left home, only a small number (33%) left home. A small number (15%) of children has, in the case of yes, left their home for the period of nearly one month, and then they came back. A small number (15%) of children attributes leaving their homes because of friends' influence. As divorce and disassembly affects immediately to the female part of the family, divorced mothers seem to be distanced from their children. A small number (14%) of children says that their mothers take care of them. Further, how children perceive their social image and how far others' treatment of the affected children are of serious sociological consideration as the social identity of such a growing child is clearly linked with their destabilized family, and it has unavoidable consequences for children, positive or negative. Larger number (42%) of children feels that society looks on them with sympathy and respect. Significantly, home as a primary social unit is proven again and more so for children in terms of social and psychological security and support. Hence the stability and durability of such an institution has to be taken even more seriously especially for the future of the society. The hither to neglected perspective of children must be placed high to understand a family and so society too to get a continuous picture of society.

4. <u>Impact of Family Disassembly on Family Itself:</u> Although most of the children considered for the study are supported by their single parent, for children the life is not an easy flowing process especially in social psychological terms. Large segment (39%) of children has insecure relation with their single parents, and a big portion of (39%) of children feels that they are dealt with carelessness by single parents. A notable fact is that mostly mothers make home for the children the disassembled families, large number (42%) of children who stay

with mothers prove this. It is worth mention that the educational care and support for children are still remain of single parent's consideration for the most part. Larger number (45%) of children gets normal follow-ups from single parents on studies and other works. These care and support from their single parents amidst the destabilized familial condition have a positive impact on the children generating emotional returns for the good. Majority (77%) of children have the feeling of love and respect towards their custodians/guardians.

5. <u>Impact of Family Disassembly on Society:</u> Contrary to the general assumption about any child who experienced of family disassembly, the children came under this study show that they are as much part of the society as any other. But the particular experience of a conflict ridden family makes children sometimes rebellious against the existing order of norms and values in the larger society. Majority (60%) of children expresses their respect towards the society, and the lowest number of them (15%) formed up the behavior of rebellion against society's values. Majority (74%) of children have not been arrested by the police as they did not get involved in any crime, some got (26%). Larger number (44%) of children sometimes visits their relatives. However, it must be part of the serious consideration of every other individual in the society, that the affected children's efforts to follow the ways of normal life should not be a point to trivialize the social and psychological intensity of life that these children undergo. It just shows that the more the familial and social support, and the less the social distancing and prejudice, the more normal their life is.

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