

Social Anxiety Disorder Among a Sample of Divorced Women in the Jerusalem Suburbs

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Abstract:

Background: This study examines social anxiety disorder among divorced women in the suburbs of Jerusalem, focusing on the influence of demographic factors such as age, duration of marriage, number of children, and place of residence on social anxiety levels. The study sheds light on the social and psychological challenges faced by these women in Palestinian society, where divorce often results in social stigma.

Method: The study utilized a descriptive-analytical approach with a convenience sample of 103 divorced women from the Jerusalem suburbs. The Social Anxiety Scale was used to measure social anxiety levels, and its validity and reliability were confirmed through statistical analyses. The study employed t-tests, one-way ANOVA, and Pearson correlation to analyze the data.

Results: The findings indicated significant differences in social anxiety disorder levels based on age, duration of marriage, number of children, and place of residence. Younger women and those with shorter marriages exhibited higher levels of anxiety. Women without children and those living with family showed elevated anxiety levels compared to those with children and those living independently.

Conclusions: The results underscore the importance of addressing the social and psychological well-being of divorced women in Jerusalem's suburbs. The findings suggest that age, marriage duration, number of children, and living arrangements play significant roles in shaping the social anxiety levels of divorced women. The study calls for targeted interventions to support these women and improve their quality of life.

Keywords: Social anxiety disorder, Divorced women.

Introduction:

Divorce is a significant life event that can have negative psychological effects, including social anxiety disorder. Studies indicate that women who have been through divorce often face psychological and social challenges due to changes in family dynamics, limited social support, and the absence of a partner, which increases their susceptibility to social anxiety (Leopold, 2018). Furthermore, divorce is linked to higher levels of chronic stress, social isolation, and exposure to emotional and psychological abuse, all of which can make divorced women more vulnerable to developing psychological disorders (Shimkowski & Ledbetter, 2018).

Divorce has a significant impact on individuals' mental health, particularly women. Research indicates that divorced women are more likely to experience psychological disorders such as anxiety and depression compared to others. A study suggests that women with generalized anxiety disorder find it more challenging to enter new relationships after divorce, leading to increased stress and anxiety levels in personal relationships (Yoon & Zinbarg, 2007). Additionally, women undergoing divorce often experience multiple psychological issues, including impairments in physical, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and social functioning, significantly affecting their quality of life (Akter & Begum, 2012). Furthermore, studies have shown that divorce is associated with an increased risk of mental disorders such as generalized anxiety disorder and depression, highlighting the need for psychological and therapeutic interventions to alleviate these problems (Schaan et al., 2019).

Social anxiety is a common phenomenon, especially among divorced women who face financial and social challenges that impact their personal decisions. Divorce complicates the situation, particularly in Palestinian society, where women bear the responsibility for the marriage's failure and face social stigma, leading to negative psychological effects such as sadness, loneliness, and psychological instability (Al-Nashif, 2007). Divorced women face psychological and social problems, including low self-esteem and declining social relationships (Darwish et al., 1995). Divorce or widowhood leads to psychological insecurity, increasing the likelihood of psychological disorders (Zahran, 2015). Social belonging plays an essential role in promoting a sense of security. Divorced women often experience psychological loneliness, which can lead to increased stress and anxiety, and can hurt their psychological and social well-being (Yildiz, 2016; Rokach, 2004). Psychological loneliness is associated with difficulties in forming healthy social relationships, which in turn can lead to psychological disorders such as anxiety and depression (Dahlberg et al., 2018). Divorce, whether formal or emotional, has significant psychological effects on those

affected, particularly women. Divorced individuals often suffer from negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, loneliness, and guilt. These feelings may escalate into psychological disorders like social anxiety disorder. Research indicates that divorce is a major stressor, making individuals prone to long-term psychological disorders that affect their daily quality of life (Amato, 2014; Overbeek et al., 2006). The current study aims to analyze this phenomenon among a sample of divorced women in the suburbs of Jerusalem, focusing on the social and psychological factors influencing the onset of social anxiety disorder among them (Schaan & Vögele, 2016).

In previous studies, the relationship between social anxiety disorder among divorced women and various factors such as age, duration of marriage, number of children, and living arrangements was explored. Khreesat et al. (2023) found that the 25-44 age group experienced higher levels of psychological loneliness, while Shawakfeh and Al-Mahayra (2022) did not find differences in social anxiety disorder levels based on age. However, Sharabini and Hanna's (2022) study suggested that older women may have better change management skills compared to younger women. Recent studies by Salari et al. (2024) and Azab (2022) indicated that social anxiety disorder is more prevalent in younger women in the early stages of divorce.

Regarding the duration of marriage, Shawakfeh and Al-Mahayra (2022) indicated that divorced women with marriages lasting one year or less, or more than 19 years, were more likely to experience symptoms of social anxiety disorder. This suggests that the duration of marriage may impact mental health post-divorce. Another study by Pateraki & Roussi (2012) suggested that longer marriages provide social and emotional support, potentially reducing social anxiety levels over time. In terms of the number of children, studies by Shawakfeh and Al-Mahayra (2022), Kim et al. (2023), and AL-Shahrani & Hammad (2023) confirmed that divorced women without children were more susceptible to social anxiety disorder compared to those with children. Lastly, concerning living arrangements, Khreesat et al. (2023) found that women living independently reported higher psychological security than those living with others. Additionally, Sharabini and Hanna's (2022) study, along with Dang et al. (2024), suggested that women with independent housing exhibited better change management skills than those living with family.

Research Problem:

In the suburbs of Jerusalem, many divorced women experience social anxiety disorder, which significantly impacts their daily lives and their ability to interact socially. This disorder is worsened by social and cultural challenges that impose additional pressures on divorced women in Palestinian society, where they are sometimes perceived negatively. The issue is that social anxiety disorder

can lead to social isolation and intensify feelings of stress and anxiety, ultimately affecting their quality of life and their reintegration into society after divorce.

Research Importance:

This study's importance stems from the urgent need to understand the prevalence of social anxiety disorder among divorced women in the Jerusalem suburbs and the impact of this disorder on their psychological and social lives. The study also aims to identify the factors that contribute to increasing or decreasing social anxiety among divorced women, such as age, number of children, duration of marriage, and living arrangements after divorce. The expected results from this study can contribute to designing psychological and social support programs to help divorced women overcome this disorder and improve their quality of life.

Methodology:

The study used a descriptive-analytical method to achieve its objectives, as it is suitable for understanding the prevalence of social anxiety disorder among divorced women in the Jerusalem suburbs and the factors influencing it. This method involves describing the phenomenon and analyzing its data using questionnaires and precise analytical techniques to reach scientific conclusions about the problem.

Study Population and Sample:

The study population consisted of divorced women in the Jerusalem suburbs. A convenience sample of 103 divorced women was selected to ensure the sample's representation of different categories of divorced women in terms of age, number of children, and living conditions.

Here is the academic translation of the table title:

Table (1): Distribution of the Study Sample According to Study Variables.

Variable	Level	Frequency	Percent
Age	18-28	31	30.1%
	29-39	29	28.2%
	40-49	26	25.2%
	50 and above	17	16.5%
Duration of Marriage	1-5	41	39.8%

	6-10	26	25.2%
	11-16	24	23.3%
	17 and above	12	11.7%
Number of Children	None	52	50.5%
	1-2	45	43.7%
	3-4	6	5.8%
Place of Residence	With family	70	68.0%
	Independent residence	33	32.0%

The data in Table (1) indicate the demographic distribution of a sample of divorced women in the suburbs of Jerusalem according to several variables. The largest age group is women aged between 18 and 28 years, accounting for 30.1%, followed by the 29 to 39 age group at 28.2%, while the lowest percentage is for women over 50 years old, at 16.5%. As for the duration of marriage, most women had marriages lasting from 1 to 5 years, representing 39.8%, while the smallest percentage is for women whose marriages lasted 17 years or more, at 11.7%. Regarding the number of children, 50.5% of the women have no children, while 43.7% have one or two children. As for the place of residence, the vast majority of divorced women live with their families, accounting for 68%, while only 32% live independently.

Study Instrument:

After reviewing the educational literature and previous studies related to the study topic and the scales used therein, the Social Anxiety Scale, developed by Shawakfeh and Al-Mahayra (2022), was used. The scale consists of 28 items. Responses were recorded as "Yes" (2) and "No" (1).

Validity and Reliability:

The validity of the instrument was verified by calculating Pearson's correlation coefficient for the questionnaire items with the overall score of the instrument. Statistical significance was found in all items, indicating internal consistency. The reliability of the instrument was also verified using Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient, with an overall score of 0.91, indicating suitable reliability for the study purposes.

Statistical Processing:

After collecting the questionnaires and ensuring their validity for analysis, the data were coded and prepared for entry into the computer for appropriate statistical analysis using the SPSS program. Statistical analyses included calculating means and standard deviations for each item, as well as using the t-test, one-way ANOVA, Pearson correlation coefficient, and Cronbach's Alpha reliability equation.

Analysis:

The analysis of the study results related to the topic "Social Anxiety Disorder Among a Sample of Divorced Women in the Suburbs of Jerusalem" will be presented, highlighting the impact of each variable based on the responses of the sample to the study instrument and the analysis of the statistical data obtained.

Table (2): One-way ANOVA results for responses regarding social anxiety disorder among a sample of divorced women according to the age variable.

age	N	M	SD	F Value	P Value
18-28	31	1.56	0.29	6.10	0.00
29-39	29	1.42	0.19		
40-49	26	1.37	0.18		
50 and above	17	1.29	0.21		

The results of the one-way ANOVA in Table (2) indicate statistically significant differences in the levels of social anxiety disorder among a sample of divorced women according to the age variable. The mean score for social anxiety levels was 1.555 for divorced women aged between 18 and 28 years, 1.417 for those aged 29 to 39, and 1.370 for those aged 40 to 49, while the divorced women aged over 50 recorded the lowest mean score of 1.290. These differences were statistically significant at a level of $P = .001$ with an F-value of 6.101, indicating that social anxiety levels significantly decrease with age.

Table (3): One-way ANOVA results for responses regarding social anxiety disorder among a sample of divorced women according to the duration of marriage variable.

duration of marriage	N	M	SD	F Value	P Value
1-5	41	1.56	0.16	14.11	0.00
6-10	26	1.44	0.24		
11-16	24	1.30	0.22		
17 and above	12	1.20	0.21		
Total	103	1.43	0.24		

The results of the one-way ANOVA in Table (3) indicate statistically significant differences in the levels of social anxiety disorder among a sample of divorced women according to the duration of marriage variable. The mean score for social anxiety levels was 1.558 for divorced women whose marriages lasted between 1 and 5 years, 1.442 for those whose marriages lasted between 6 and 10 years, and 1.296 for those whose marriages lasted between 11 and 16 years, while the divorced women whose marriages lasted 17 years or more recorded the lowest mean score of 1.196. These differences were statistically significant at a level of $P = .000$ with an F-value of 14.110, indicating that social anxiety levels significantly decrease with the increase in the duration of marriage among the sample of divorced women.

Table (4): One-way ANOVA results for responses regarding social anxiety disorder among a sample of divorced women according to the number of children variable.

number of children	N	M	SD	F Value	P Value
None	52	1.51	0.24	6.75	0.00
1-2	45	1.34	0.22		
3-4	6	1.38	0.10		
Total	103	1.43	0.24		

The results of the one-way ANOVA in Table (4) indicate statistically significant differences in the levels of social anxiety disorder among a sample of divorced women according to the number of children variable. The mean score for social anxiety levels was 1.507 for divorced women without children, 1.338 for those with 1 to 2 children, while the mean was 1.381 for those with 3 to 4 children. These differences were statistically significant at a level of $P = .002$ with an F-value of

6.751, indicating that social anxiety levels significantly decrease with a greater number of children. Divorced women without children exhibit higher levels of social anxiety compared to those with children.

Table (5): T-test results for responses regarding social anxiety disorder among a sample of divorced women according to the drug use variable based on the place of residence.

place of residence	N	M	SD	T Value	P Value
With family	70	1.46	0.23	2.30	0.03
Independent residence	33	1.35	0.25		

The T-test results in Table (5) indicate statistically significant differences in the levels of social anxiety disorder among a sample of divorced women according to the variable of place of residence. The mean score for social anxiety levels was 1.463 for divorced women living with their families, compared to 1.346 for divorced women living independently. These differences were statistically significant at a level of $P = .025$ with a T-value of 2.304, indicating that divorced women living with their families experience higher levels of social anxiety disorder compared to those living independently.

Discussion:

The results of the one-way ANOVA show significant differences in levels of social anxiety disorder among divorced women based on age. These differences can be attributed to various psychological and social factors. Younger women (aged 18-28) may experience higher levels of social anxiety due to the psychological and social pressures following divorce, especially as they are often at the early stages of their professional or social lives and are more affected by the stigma of divorce and resulting social changes. On the other hand, older women may have developed better-coping strategies or found relative stability after a longer period post-divorce, leading to lower levels of social anxiety. These findings contrast with Shawakfeh and Al-Mahayra's (2022) study, which found no significant age-related differences in social anxiety disorder levels, but are consistent with the results of Sharabini and Hanna (2022), as well as Salari et al. (2024) and Azab (2022), all of which suggest that older women are better at managing change compared to younger women.

The results show significant differences in levels of social anxiety disorder among divorced women based on the duration of their marriage. Divorced women with shorter marriages (1 to 5 years) may experience higher levels of social anxiety due to the sudden and drastic changes in their lives after

the divorce. This group may have less experience in coping with psychological and social pressures, leading to higher levels of social anxiety. On the other hand, divorced women with longer marriages (17 years or more) may have more experience dealing with marital and social problems, which enhances their ability to cope with divorce and reduces their levels of social anxiety. These findings align with the study by Shawakfeh and Al-Mahayra (2022) and the study by Pateraki and Roussi (2012), which suggested that divorced women with shorter marriages were more susceptible to symptoms of social anxiety disorder, highlighting the impact of marriage duration on mental health post-divorce.

The results indicate statistically significant differences in social anxiety disorder levels among divorced women according to the number of children variable. These results may be explained by the fact that divorced women without children may experience higher levels of social anxiety due to feelings of isolation or a lack of social support. Children can be a source of emotional support and psychological stability. Women with children may have lower levels of social anxiety because having children gives them a defined social role and responsibility that helps alleviate stress. These results are consistent with the studies by Kim et al. (2023), Al-Shahrani and Hammad (2023), and Khuaiter (2010), which showed that divorced women with more than five children experience higher levels of psychological security compared to others. The study by Shawakfeh and Al-Mahayra (2022) also found that divorced women without children were more prone to social anxiety disorder compared to those with children.

The study's results show significant differences in levels of social anxiety disorder among divorced women based on their place of residence. Divorced women living with their families tend to experience higher levels of social anxiety, possibly due to increased stress from daily interactions with family members and additional social pressures related to their status. They may feel subjected to greater expectations or social constraints, leading to higher social anxiety levels. On the other hand, divorced women living independently may feel more autonomous and experience greater personal freedom, resulting in lower levels of social anxiety. These findings align with previous studies by Dang et al. (2024) and Khreesat et al. (2023), which indicated that women living independently have higher psychological security than those living with others. Additionally, a study by Sharabini and Hanna (2022) noted that women living independently exhibit better change management compared to those living with family.

Conclusion:

the study highlights noteworthy variations in levels of social anxiety disorder among divorced women, based on factors such as age, duration of marriage, number of children, and place of residence. Younger women and those with shorter marriages tend to experience higher levels of anxiety, whereas older women and those with longer marriages exhibit better coping mechanisms. Furthermore, women without children and those living with family members tend to experience greater anxiety, whereas having children and living independently offer psychological support and independence, resulting in reduced anxiety levels. These findings are consistent with previous studies, underscoring the significance of social and psychological elements in the adjustment process following a divorce.

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