

The Role of Social Factors in the Prevalence of Divorce and Its Implications for Algerian Society

Le rôle des facteurs sociaux dans la prévalence du divorce et ses répercussions sur la société algérienne

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Received: 05/03/2026

Accepted: 01/06/2026

Published: 25/08/2026

Abstract:

Divorce is a complex social and family phenomenon whose causes and consequences extend beyond the dissolution of the marital bond to affect spouses, children, family stability, and social cohesion. In Algeria, social and economic transformations, changing family roles and values, women's increasing participation in education and employment, housing difficulties, and the influence of media and social networking platforms have contributed to reshaping marital relations and expectations. This study aims to examine the principal social factors associated with the prevalence of divorce in Algerian society and to analyze its implications for the family and society, with particular attention to children. Methodologically, the study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach based on relevant sociological and legal literature and previously published studies. Based on the reviewed literature, the analysis indicates that divorce is a multidimensional phenomenon resulting from the interaction of social, economic, cultural, psychological, and familial factors rather than from a single cause. Its consequences may extend to children's psychological, social, and educational well-being, family relationships, and social cohesion. The study emphasizes the importance of preventive measures, premarital education and counseling, family guidance and reconciliation mechanisms, and appropriate psychological and social support for families affected by divorce.

Keywords: Divorce; Social Factors; Algerian Society; Family Breakdown; Marital Relations; Children; Family Stability; Social Cohesion.

Résumé:

Le divorce constitue un phénomène social et familial complexe dont les causes et les conséquences dépassent la dissolution du lien conjugal pour affecter les conjoints, les enfants, la stabilité familiale et la cohésion sociale. En Algérie, les transformations sociales et économiques, l'évolution des rôles et des valeurs familiales, la participation croissante des femmes à l'éducation et à l'emploi, les difficultés liées au logement ainsi que l'influence des médias et des réseaux sociaux ont contribué à modifier les relations conjugales et les attentes à l'égard du mariage. Cette étude vise à examiner les principaux facteurs sociaux associés à la prévalence du divorce dans la

société algérienne et à analyser ses répercussions sur la famille et la société, en accordant une attention particulière aux enfants. Sur le plan méthodologique, l'étude adopte une approche descriptive et analytique fondée sur la littérature sociologique et juridique pertinente ainsi que sur des études académiques antérieures. Sur la base de la littérature examinée, l'analyse indique que le divorce constitue un phénomène multidimensionnel résultant de l'interaction de facteurs sociaux, économiques, culturels, psychologiques et familiaux, plutôt que d'une cause unique. Ses conséquences peuvent s'étendre au bien-être psychologique, social et éducatif des enfants, aux relations familiales et à la cohésion sociale. L'étude souligne ainsi l'importance des mesures préventives, de l'éducation et de l'accompagnement pré-nuptiaux, du renforcement des mécanismes d'orientation et de réconciliation familiales, ainsi que d'un soutien psychologique et social approprié aux familles concernées.

Mots-clés : Divorce ; facteurs sociaux ; société algérienne ; désagrégation familiale ; relations conjugales ; enfants ; stabilité familiale ; cohésion sociale.

1. Introduction

Divorce is a complex social and family phenomenon whose causes and consequences extend beyond the formal dissolution of the marital bond. Although divorce may be initiated by the husband, established by mutual consent between the spouses, or sought by the wife under the legally prescribed conditions, men may also experience significant psychological consequences following the dissolution of marriage, communication difficulties, economic pressures, and tensions related to the distribution of family responsibilities. Consequently, divorce should not be viewed solely as a private dispute between spouses, but rather as a phenomenon influenced by broader transformations in family structures, social values, gender roles, and patterns of social interaction.

The consequences of divorce may also extend beyond the spouses to affect the family as a whole. Children may be particularly vulnerable to the consequences of family disruption, especially when separation is accompanied by parental conflict, economic difficulties, changes in residence, or weakened communication with one of the parents. Divorce may also affect relationships within the extended family and modify established patterns of kinship and social support. For this reason, the sociological study of divorce requires attention not only to its causes but also to its implications for family stability and social cohesion.

The Algerian context is particularly relevant to the study of these dynamics. Algerian families have experienced significant social and economic transformations in recent decades, including changes in family roles, women's increasing access to education and employment, changing social and cultural values, greater individual autonomy, and the growing influence of mass media and digital communication. At the same time, economic pressures, housing difficulties, employment conditions, and relations with the extended family may place additional pressures on marital relationships. These factors should not be regarded as uniform or direct causes of divorce; rather, they may interact with individual and familial circumstances and influence marital stability.

Against this background, the present study examines the principal social factors associated with the prevalence of divorce in Algerian society and analyzes its implications for spouses, children, family stability, and social cohesion. Particular attention is given to changing family roles and values, women's educational and professional participation, extended-family relations, economic and housing pressures, and the influence of contemporary media and social networking platforms. The study also seeks to highlight the importance of preventive and supportive mechanisms for managing marital conflicts and mitigating the consequences of family breakdown.

Accordingly, this study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach and falls within the scope of theoretical, library-based research rather than empirical or field research. It draws on relevant sociological and legal literature, as well as previously published academic studies addressing divorce, family transformations, marital relations, and the social consequences of marital dissolution. The study also analyzes this literature to identify the main factors associated with divorce, clarify the nature of their interaction, and assess their implications for spouses, children, family stability, and social cohesion. Accordingly, the study does not seek to provide field-based measurements or establish statistical causal relationships; rather, it focuses on analyzing and interpreting the available scholarly literature in light of the specific characteristics of the Algerian social context.

The importance of the study lies in linking broader social transformations in Algerian society to changes in marital and family relations. By approaching divorce as a multidimensional social phenomenon, the study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors associated with marital dissolution and its consequences for the family and society.

Accordingly, the study addresses the following central research question:

What are the principal social factors associated with the prevalence of divorce in Algerian society, and what are its main implications for the family and society?

This question gives rise to three sub-questions:

1. What are the most significant social, cultural, and economic factors associated with divorce in the Algerian family?
2. How does divorce affect spouses and children?
3. What are the broader implications of divorce for family stability and social cohesion?

The study assumes that divorce in Algerian society results from the interaction of multiple and interrelated factors rather than from a single determinant. It further assumes that its consequences may extend beyond the marital relationship to affect children, family relations, and broader patterns of social cohesion.

2. The Concept and Characteristics of Divorce

Divorce is one of the social phenomena that has received considerable attention in family and sociological studies because of its legal, psychological, economic, and cultural dimensions and its consequences, which extend beyond the marital relationship to affect the family and society as a whole. Accordingly, examining this phenomenon requires first addressing the concept and

characteristics of divorce, followed by an analysis of the main factors influencing its occurrence and prevalence and its various implications.

2.1. The Concept of Divorce

Divorce is a legal and social process that terminates the marital relationship and carries significant consequences for the spouses, children, and wider family structure.

2.1.1. Linguistic Definition of Divorce

"In Arabic lexicography, *al-talāq* (divorce) is a verbal noun derived from *ṭallaqa*. It is said, 'the man divorced his wife' (*ṭallaqa al-rajulu zawjatahu*), rather than 'he released her' (*aṭlaqahā*). It denotes the removal of a restraint or bond, whether physical (such as untying a tethered horse) or abstract/moral (such as dissolving the marriage bond). The term is rooted in *al-iṭlāq*, which means setting free or releasing after containment. Idiomatically, it is said, 'I released the camel from its tether,' 'I granted you free rein in your opinion,' and 'I left the people' in the sense of departing from them just as a man leaves a woman. Likewise, a she-camel is described as *ṭāliq* when she is left to roam without a tether. In conventional usage, *ṭalāq* has predominantly come to signify the removal of an abstract bond, whereas *iṭlāq* is used for removing a physical restraint. Applied to women, divorce carries two core meanings: first, dissolving the marriage covenant; second, abandonment and release" (Al-Qudah, 2012, p. 7).

2.1.2. Jurisprudential (Sharī'ah) Definition of Divorce

"It is the dissolution of the marriage contract and the annulment of the matrimonial union, executed verbally or through a financial settlement, using specific, designated legal phraseology" (Al-Abd, 2000, p. 32).

2.1.3. Sociological Definition of Divorce

"It is a manifestation of family breakdown and the collapse of the domestic unit, involving the dissolution of associated social role structures. Through this process, the family permanently fractures, the spouses separate, and child custody is assumed by one parent—typically as a consequence of escalating marital discord that reaches an irreconcilable impasse" (Saoudi, 2017, p. 113).

2.1.4. Legal Definition under the Algerian Family Code

Pursuant to Article 48 of the Algerian Family Code, divorce is defined as "the dissolution of the marriage bond, occurring by the will of the husband, by mutual consent of both spouses, or at the request of the wife within the legal limits and grounds stipulated under Articles 53 and 54 of this Code" (People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, 2005, pp. 11–12).

2.1.5. The Concept of Family Breakdown

"It refers to functional impairment within the family or the collapse of structural roles and household organization due to the absence of one or both parents—whether through death, incarceration, or divorce. It stems from emotional estrangement within familial relationships, characterized by chronic tension and persistent disputes" (Al-Qasim, 2018, p. 8).

3. Types of Divorce

"Divorce is categorized—according to the possibility or impossibility of spousal reinstatement (*raj'ah*) with or without a new marriage contract—into revocable and irrevocable divorce" (Jalal & Rokab, 2023, p. 88):

3.1. Revocable Divorce (*Talāq Raj'ī*)

A form of dissolution in which the husband retains the legal right to reinstate his divorced wife to the marital home during her waiting period (*'iddah*) without requiring a new contract or dowry, regardless of whether she consents to the reinstatement.

3.2. Irrevocable Divorce (*Talāq Bā'in*)

This form is subdivided into two categories:

- a. **Minor Irrevocability (*Baynūnah Sughrā*):** A divorce after which the former husband cannot reinstate his divorced wife to the marital home except through a newly executed marriage contract and a new dowry.
- b. **Major Irrevocability (*Baynūnah Kubrā*):** A divorce after which the former husband cannot remarry his divorced wife unless she has subsequently entered into a valid, consummated marriage with another man, followed by its lawful termination (through divorce or death) and the completion of her mandatory waiting period.

4. Factors Contributing to Divorce

Divorce is a multidimensional social phenomenon resulting from the interaction of several interconnected factors. Although the present study focuses primarily on social factors, economic, psychological, cultural, religious, technological, and housing-related conditions are also considered insofar as they interact with the social environment and influence marital stability.

4.1. Economic Factors

Among the most prominent economic factors is the husband's poverty and the resulting inability to meet the financial needs and requirements of his wife and children. Conversely, economic prosperity may, under certain circumstances, generate marital pressures, particularly when differences in consumption patterns, material expectations, financial priorities, or lifestyles lead to conflict between spouses. Therefore, the relationship between economic conditions and marital stability is not limited to poverty alone; rather, different economic circumstances may affect marital relationships depending on the nature of the expectations, obligations, and living patterns shared by the spouses (Saqr, 2006, p. 365).

4.2. Social Factors

Key social factors include disparities in social background between spouses—differences that are often overlooked prior to marriage due to superficial attractions, such as physical appearance, only to become a source of friction once married life begins. In addition, inherited customs that exclude prospective spouses from mutual consultation or prevent them from seeing each other before marriage play a significant role. Furthermore, shifts in modern social consciousness and women's pursuit of equality have introduced complex dynamics into marital relationships. Similarly, women's workforce participation as an established right—while empowering—can sometimes lead to domestic strain, divided household responsibilities, and

expanded professional interactions outside the marriage. These dynamics, alongside modern legal reforms that streamline divorce procedures and provide institutional support in the courts, have collectively contributed to the phenomenon (Saqr, 2006, p. 365).

4.3. Structural and Societal Pressures on Marriage

From the foregoing, the increasing divorce rates observed worldwide today can be attributed to the severe pressures affecting the institution of marriage. Among the most significant of these pressures are the following (Ibrahim Al-Ezabi, pp. 77–79):

- a. The structural transition from the extended family model to the nuclear family pattern, accompanied by the emergence of external social institutions that assume primary functions traditionally performed by the family.
- b. The growing demographic of educated women capable of securing an independent livelihood autonomous from their husbands (e.g., through formal employment).
- c. The frequent conflict between domestic family demands and occupational conditions, generating structural role conflict between familial and professional responsibilities.
- d. The extensive involvement of both spouses in extra-familial activities, hindering their capacity to satisfactorily fulfill domestic commitments and generating friction that accelerates marital breakdown.
- e. The psychological impact of rapid socio-cultural transformations in urban society, which fosters chronic anxiety and subjective instability among individuals, thereby reinforcing individualistic attitudes and diminishing the willingness to make mutual sacrifices for the sake of the marital collective.

4.4. Religious and Value-Based Factors

Religious beliefs and value systems may influence attitudes toward marriage, marital responsibilities, conflict management, and divorce. In societies where marriage is strongly associated with religious and moral values, the internalization of these values may contribute to strengthening commitment and encouraging patience and reconciliation during marital conflicts. Conversely, the weakening of shared value frameworks may reduce the normative constraints that traditionally encourage marital continuity (Belmihoub, 2015, p. 101).

4.5. Psychological Factors

Psychological dynamics cannot be isolated from other drivers of divorce; they manifest prominently when either partner fails to provide emotional fulfillment, when psychological disorders affect one of the spouses, or when persistent marital dissatisfaction takes hold (Bouhnika, 2017, p. 157).

Given that foundational emotional and psychological needs are primarily fulfilled within the family, certain vulnerabilities can severely destabilize the union. A wife may find it unsustainable to continue living with a passive or emotionally insecure partner, which deprives her of a sense of safety. Moreover, unchecked and irrational jealousy often fuels acute marital conflict. Entrenched patriarchal attitudes that reduce the woman to a domestic servant or an object

of pleasure represent another major catalyst; when a husband disregards his wife's rights and subjects her to unfair treatment, it inexorably leads to the deterioration of the marital relationship (Zerarqa & Adal, 2024, p. 67).

4.6. Mass Media and Social Networking Platforms

Arab societies are undergoing substantial cultural, social, economic, and political shifts resulting from rapid technological transformations that have affected the structure and functions of core social institutions, notably the family and the school. The pervasive integration of internet technology and smart devices into households has rendered them accessible across all age groups. Among the adverse outcomes of this digital exposure are weakened parental supervision, reduced interpersonal communication among family members, and diminished indicators of psychological harmony and emotional well-being—ultimately creating deep relational rifts caused by excessive internet use within the household (Al-Qasim, 2018, p. 29).

4.7. Housing Shortages

The housing crisis remains one of the most critical determinants of divorce, "as it directly contributes to the breakdown of marital ties. A large proportion of newlyweds are unable to secure independent housing and are forced into cohabitation with extended family—particularly the husband's parents. This arrangement deprives the couple of necessary autonomy, invites external interference in their private affairs, breeds chronic domestic instability, and ultimately leads to divorce (Musalli & Madani, 2018, p. 394).

5. Social Impacts of Divorce

Divorce is not limited to the dissolution of the marital bond; rather, its consequences extend to the family and society, affecting social relationships, family stability, and social cohesion.

5.1. Multidimensional Impacts of Divorce on Men and Women

The social consequences of divorce affect both spouses, with their intensity varying according to their psychological, social, and economic circumstances, and may result in significant changes in their personal and social lives. These consequences are manifested in several aspects, as follows:

- a. Value Shift and Initial Trauma:** Divorce may constitute a significant social and psychological shock for both spouses, as it entails a fundamental change in their social status from married to divorced. This transition may be accompanied by changes in social relationships and by negative perceptions, particularly toward divorced women in societies where divorce continues to carry social stigma. Such perceptions may expose divorced individuals to psychological pressure and feelings of social marginalization, especially when they are held responsible for the failure of the marital relationship. In some cases, these pressures may contribute to social withdrawal, isolation, and difficulties in maintaining or establishing social relationships, thereby weakening interpersonal ties and aspects of social solidarity (Al-Abd, 2000, pp. 66–67).
- b. Psychological consequences for men:** Although divorce may be initiated by either spouse, occur by mutual consent, or be sought by the wife under the legally established conditions, men

may also experience significant psychological consequences following the dissolution of marriage. These may include difficulty accepting the separation, particularly when the divorce is initiated by the wife, as well as feelings of frustration, anxiety, and a perceived inability to preserve family continuity. Separation from children, particularly when custody is granted to the mother, may further intensify these emotional pressures and contribute to reluctance to enter into another marriage (Hussein & Labsir, 2022, p. 778).

- c. **Financial consequences for men:** Divorce may impose substantial financial obligations on men, particularly where they are legally required to provide maintenance and other forms of financial support in accordance with the applicable legal provisions. These obligations may include expenses related to children's maintenance, housing, and other legally established responsibilities. Such financial burdens may become particularly difficult for men with limited incomes and may affect their capacity to reorganize their economic and family lives following divorce.

5.2. Social Impacts of Divorce on Children

- a. Children are among the groups most vulnerable to the consequences of marital dissolution, particularly because their psychological, social, cognitive, and emotional development may still be ongoing. Family disruption may therefore affect their sense of security and their ability to adapt to changing family circumstances (Al-Abd, 2000, p. 70).
- b. Family breakdown may contribute to internal emotional conflicts and difficulties in adjustment, which, in some circumstances, may be expressed through behavioral tensions toward parents or the wider social environment (Al-Qasim, 2018, p. 32).
- c. In some cases, children may move from the original family home to live primarily with either parent and may experience difficulties adapting to changes in family structure, including the presence of a stepparent. Such circumstances may generate emotional tension and require significant adjustment to new family relationships (Al-Qasim, 2018, p. 32).
- d. The family constitutes an important context through which children develop their perceptions of themselves and their social environment. Consequently, changes in family relationships following divorce may influence their perceptions of family life and patterns of social interaction (Al-Kandari, 1992, p. 217).
- e. In situations characterized by persistent parental conflict, children may sometimes become involved in disputes between their parents or be placed in situations that expose them to emotional pressure. Such circumstances may negatively affect their sense of security and their relationships with both parents.
- f. Divorce and the accompanying changes in family structure may generate feelings of insecurity and anxiety among children, particularly when separation is accompanied by continuing parental conflict or significant changes in their living arrangements (Al-Kandari, 1992, p. 217).
- g. Children may also be required to adapt to different household environments with varying economic, social, and cultural conditions. Depending on the circumstances and the support available to them, such changes may contribute to emotional insecurity, difficulties in

adaptation, and instability in some aspects of their social and psychological development (Al-Qasim, 2018, p. 33).

5.3. Social Impacts of Divorce on Society

- a. While marriage strengthens and nurtures the fabric of social ties, divorce produces the exact opposite effect. We are referring here to destructive, hostile divorce that is stripped of values and moral principles—where rational judgment is suspended, causing disputes between the two extended families to escalate and spill into litigation. This may occasionally deteriorate into physical and verbal altercations, severing social ties among individuals and potentially reaching the point of factional strife, where each party rallies their clan or extended family. In the absence of reason, a law of the jungle prevails, imperiling social security and generating deep-seated animosity and hatred (Al-Abd, 2000, p. 72).
- b. Divorce inflicts significant disruption upon the core values that society seeks to instill in its members, such as solidarity, compassion, cooperation, tolerance, and aiding those in need—values vital for social cohesion. The erosion of these noble principles directly harms and destabilizes the solid bonds underpinning the social order (Hussein & Labsir, 2022, p. 780).

6. Conclusion

In light of the preceding analysis, it can be concluded that divorce in Algerian society constitutes a multifaceted familial and social phenomenon that cannot be attributed to a single cause or reduced to interpersonal disputes between spouses. Rather, the reviewed literature indicates that marital dissolution is associated with the interaction of social, economic, psychological, cultural, and legal factors. Its implications may extend beyond the termination of the marital bond to affect children, family relationships, and broader patterns of social cohesion. Accordingly, addressing this phenomenon requires a comprehensive understanding of its interconnected determinants and consequences, together with the strengthening of preventive measures, premarital education and counseling, family guidance, and reconciliation mechanisms aimed at supporting family stability and social cohesion.

Based on the analysis of the reviewed literature, several analytical findings can be identified, the most important of which are summarized as follows:

1. The analysis indicates that divorce is a multifaceted phenomenon resulting from the interaction of social, economic, psychological, and cultural factors and therefore cannot be attributed to a single cause.
2. The reviewed literature suggests that the social transformations experienced by the Algerian family—including changes in family roles, developments in educational and professional attainment, and shifts in values and patterns of thinking—have contributed to reshaping marital relationships and affecting their stability.
3. The analysis further indicates that the consequences of divorce may extend beyond the spouses, particularly affecting children's psychological, social, and educational well-being, while also influencing relationships within the family and the wider social environment.

4. The reviewed literature also highlights that the increasing prevalence of divorce calls for stronger preventive and early-intervention mechanisms, as well as an enhanced role for families, socialization institutions, counseling services, and family-reconciliation bodies in addressing marital conflicts and mitigating family disintegration.

Based on these analytical findings, several recommendations can be proposed, the most important of which are summarized as follows:

1. Expand premarital education and counseling initiatives to equip prospective spouses with essential knowledge, interpersonal competencies, and conflict-resolution skills for managing marital life and domestic disputes constructively.
2. Strengthen the institutional role of family guidance and reconciliation services by developing effective early-intervention mechanisms to assist couples in managing conflicts before they escalate into irreversible marital dissolution.
3. Provide targeted psychological, social, and educational support for children of divorced parents to help mitigate potential emotional, social, and developmental difficulties associated with family disruption.
4. Strengthen cooperation among families, educational institutions, social services, legal institutions, and media platforms to promote constructive dialogue, shared family responsibility, and greater awareness of the social factors associated with marital instability.

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