Psikohumaniora: Jurnal Penelitian Psikologi
Vol 11, No 1 (2026): 115-132. DOI: 10.21580/pjpp.v11i1.26472
ISSN 2527-7456 (online); 2502-9363 (printed)

Post-divorce psychological and social sufferings among male divorcees and their intergenerational impact on Bangladeshi families: An empirical analysis

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Abstract: As a social phenomenon, divorce has a stronger psychological and social impact on families in Bangladesh. Existing literatures have focused on the suffering of women following divorce; however, comparatively little scholarly attention has been paid to the experiences and the challenges faced by men in Bangladesh after divorce. Therefore, this study aims to explore the social and psychological suffering of male divorcees in Bangladesh and its intergenerational impact on family members. Employing a qualitative approach, in-depth interviews were conducted with twelve male divorcees, complemented by five professional experts comprising a lawyer, a Khatib, a social worker, a local government representative, and an Islamic scholar. The findings indicate that male divorcees experience significant psychological distress, including sadness, loneliness, and identity crises, alongside social challenges such as stigma, economic vulnerability, and victimization through spurious legal cases. These difficulties often extend to their children, affecting their emotional well-being and academic performance. However, the study also reveals instances of personal development, emotional resilience, and beneficial life outcomes for some male divorcees. Overall, the study contributes to the limited literature on divorce in South Asia by highlighting male psychological vulnerability, social and legal marginalization, and intergenerational consequences, while offering context-specific insights for sociology, gender studies and mental health research, and family policy in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Bangladeshi family dynamics; intergenerational effects; male divorcees; psychological distress; social stigma

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To cite this article (APA Style):
Ahsan, M. A., Ahmad, S., Nadwi, H. M. A. R., Iqbal, M. J., Noman, H. U. M., & Abrar, S. A. (2026). Post-divorce psychological and social sufferings among male divorcees and their intergenerational impact on Bangladeshi families: An empirical analysis. *Psikohumaniora: Jurnal Penelitian Psikologi*, *11*(1), 115-132. https://doi.org/10.21580/pjpp.v11i1.26472

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Introduction

The legal termination of marriage, divorce, is a very serious issue that has far-reaching psychological and social consequences for people beyond the immediate couple. Male and female divorcees face a great variety of psychological problems, such as sadness, anxiety, and a loss of personal identity (Gerstel, 1987; Mirzadjanovna, 2022), with Bangladesh being no exception in this regard. These effects can spread to the children involved, who can become emotionally unsettled and suffer from behavioral issues and social problems that might cause long-term developmental problems (Erdim & Ergün, 2019; Patoari, 2020; Rahman et al., 2013). Stigmatization of divorce by society in terms of lower respectability enhances their experience of being excluded and worsens their social reintegration (Gerstel, 1987).

Although women are usually disproportionately affected by adverse outcomes that are presented as grief and adjustment problems (Mgeladze & Shioshvili, 2024), men can equally experience acute temporary loss of well-being, elevated stress, and declining mental health after divorce, often in fact more than women, although a significant number adapt psychologically in the long term (Hallberg, 1991; Leopold, 2018; Myers, 1989). Nevertheless, divorced men are at a higher risk of depression, drug abuse, and suicide than married men (Whitley, 2021). Therefore, the impact of the consequences of divorce in Bangladesh is significant for both family dynamics and personal well-being.

In patriarchal societies such as Bangladesh, men can experience crises of psychological and social disruption, particularly over the issue of divorce. According to the gender role and social identity theories, marriage is a vital part of the self-concept of men. It is strongly connected to their culturally approved roles of provider, protector, and family stabilizer. Divorce therefore causes extensive role strain and identity loss, which reduces the perceived social value and status of men. In the stress-diathesis model, divorce is a severe life stressor that, in collaboration with social stigma and economic insecurity, leads to latent vulnerabilities that can result in depression, loneliness, and emotional withdrawal. The theory of spoiled identity (Goffman & Cliffs, 1964) posits that divorce, especially if involving contentious legal proceedings or false accusations, can lead to damage to reputations and social ostracism (Akter et al., 2024).

Cumulative disadvantage theory (Merton, 1988) also proposes that the legal, economic, and psychological disadvantages that build up over time affect more than just divorced men, with adverse social, emotional, and educational effects also on their children. The problems usually cut across generations; the children of divorced fathers tend to face emotional and social implications that impact their development, academic performance, and social abilities. Parental conflict can also have an adverse impact on children, causing anxiety, sadness, and stress after divorce (Apata et al., 2023; Dicu, 2024; K. Xu, 2024). Emotional disturbances may present themselves through behavioral disorders, such as aggression or withdrawal, adjustment disorders, and attachment disorders (Dicu, 2024; Hwang et al., 2010). Divorce may also lead to poor academic achievement, social loneliness, and an increased chance of risky behaviors, such as drug abuse or crime (Apata et al., 2023; K. Xu, 2024).

According to Rahman et al. (2013), divorce leads to significant social and economic issues, particularly for women in Bangladesh, who, on most occasions, are marginalized socially and economically crippled. The life of male divorcees can also be very miserable. A meta-analysis of 32 prospective studies by Sbarra et al. (2011) indicated that divorced men, especially younger ones, were more likely to die early compared to their married counterparts.

Social dynamics in Bangladesh in terms of gender, economic inequalities, and marriage arrangements contribute to the heightened vulnerability of divorcees (Ahmed, 1987; Chandra Sarker & Pareek, 2025; Samad, 2015). According to Munro et al. (2015), women and children will experience more poverty due to the absence of a male guardian after divorce. The misuse of legal processes such as the Dowry Prohibition Act has been a significant issue, with false cases used to bully male divorcees, causing emotional and psychological distress (Akter et al., 2024).

Divorce also has an impact on future generations. The Bangladeshi children of divorced parents are often subjected to financial hardships and hence cannot access education or medical care (Bhuiya & Chowdhury, 1997). These children are likely to engage in delinquent behavior, experience identity crises, and face more difficult socialization. Children may become negative toward marriage and struggle to build positive relationships as adults. Aftab and Younas (2023) found that they become anxious, sad, withdrawn, and perform poorly academically.

Currently available research primarily addresses the challenges women face following divorce (Rahman et al., 2013), ignoring the male perspective. The majority of studies also focus either on maternal absence or single motherhood (Bhuiya & Chowdhury, 1997) without consideration of the impact of male suffering after divorce on their children. In Bangladesh, cultural demands and gender norms play a major role in the psychological and social consequences of divorce among male divorcees (Munro et al., 2015). The misuse of the Dowry Prohibition Act shows ignorance of the legal challenges faced by male divorcees (Akter et al., 2024).

Since empirical studies on the experiences of male divorcees in Bangladesh are rare, we employ a qualitative research design that involves the use of in-depth interviews to uncover facts related to the psychological distress and social stigma that men can experience in their transition to post-divorce life. The study also considers the intergenerational impacts of post-divorce misery on Bangladeshi families. The research covers psychological distress, social stigma, and inter-generational family relationship impacts by integrating theoretical underpinnings with discussion of lived experiences. It aims to contribute holistic knowledge of the psychological, social, and familial effects of divorce on men in order to help implement specific mental health interventions, legal changes, and social attitude changes. The study addresses a major gap in the mental health research, gender discourse, and family studies literature in Bangladesh.

Methods

Research Design

A qualitative research design and an interpretive and thematic analysis framework were employed to explore the psychological and social suffering of male divorcees in Bangladesh and the intergenerational impact of these on their families. A qualitative research design was used because subjective, complex, and context-specific experiences could not be adequately assessed quantitatively.

Data Collection

Data were gathered from two complementary sources: primary and secondary data. The qualitative data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with purposively selected respondents: twelve divorcees of varying socio-economic status and five professionals, including a legal practitioner, a local government representative, an Islamic scholar, a *khatib*, and a social worker. A sample of 17 participants is sufficient to achieve thematic depth and analytic saturation in an in-depth qualitative study, aligning with methodological guidance recommending approximately 10 to 25 participants for such

research designs (Creswell & Poth, 2024). The researchers were all male Muslims, which may have made them more open during interviews, although they could not rule out unconscious bias in framing or interpretation. The increased gender and religious diversity of the researchers would have possibly raised the level of neutrality.

The authors prepared a questionnaire guide and sent it to faculty members of the Department of Laws at the International Islamic University Chittagong for review. The in-depth interviews lasted between 1.5 and 2 hours, allowing for discussion of the psychological distress after divorce, social stigma, legal victimization, economic issues, and intergenerational effects.

Purposive sampling ensured diversity in age, socioeconomic status, educational background, and urban/rural living environment. Male divorcees were selected if they had divorced at least a year before the interview. The sample included both rural and urban respondents, although more rural and less-educated participants would have provided more detailed insight. Five professionals were selected because of their experience with marital and divorce disputes.

Participants

To ensure confidentiality, all respondents were anonymized using symbolic code names, without discrimination based on their names, backgrounds, families, or professional positions. The first group of respondents, comprising male divorcees, was coded as 'MD,' while the second group, consisting of the professional experts, was coded as 'EX.' Table 1 presents key information about the study respondents.

Data Analysis

The secondary data were gathered by extensive searching of journal papers, books, newspaper articles, and web articles related to divorce in Bangladesh. It facilitated positioning the results in scholarly discussions and triangulation by introducing theoretical frameworks into the analysis.

The primary and secondary data were systematically subjected to thematic analysis through an inductive-deductive method. Two independent coders analyzed the data to enhance rigor. The interview transcripts were coded, and meaning units were identified through participants' narratives and concepts in the literature. The coders reviewed the codes with each other and clarified differences through discussion to achieve satisfactory inter-coder reliability. The first themes were developed through code clustering and evaluated against the data for internal consistency. Finally, the five major thematic areas (Table 2) were identified, such as psychological distress of male divorcees, social stigmatization and economic hardship, legal exploitation, intergenerational impact on children, and lack of institutional support and need for reform. The themes were cross-linked with secondary data to verify the interpretations and enhance credibility.

Ethical Considerations

Data collection adhered to ethical clearance, and participants were fully aware of the purpose of the research, their right to withdraw, and data confidentiality. The authors obtained informed consent from all interviewees and anonymized all transcription, analysis, and reporting processes to protect participants' privacy and dignity. In addition, the Research Ethics Committee (REC), Center for Research and Publication (CRP), Chittagong, Bangladesh, granted ethical approval (IIUC/CRP/113/2026(02).

Results

The thematic analysis revealed several important themes that showcased the complex psychological and social suffering that Bangladeshi male divorcees faced and its impact on different generations.

Table 1

Details of the Respondents (Twelve Male Divorcees and Five Professional Experts)

No.	Respondents ID	Position and Role	Year of Divorce and Location
1	MD1	PhD holder, 47 years old, and an assistant professor at a government college. His divorced wife, who also works, has an MA	2015; Chittagong, Urban
2	MD2	An assistant professor at a private university with an MA, 48 years old. His ex-spouse works as a teacher with an MA	2020; Chittagong, Urban
3	MD3	A freelancer with an MA, 20 years old. His ex-wife is a homemaker with an MA	2023; Chittagong, Urban
4	MD4	An assistant professor at a private university with an MA, 45 years old. His ex-spouse, an MBA, is a school teacher.	2022; Comilla, Urban
5	MD5	An associate professor with an MA, 50 years old. His ex-spouse holds an MA	2010; Chittagong, Rural
6	MD6	A businessman with an HSC degree, 50 years old. His spouse holds an SSC degree.	2010; Feni, Rural
7	MD7	A shopkeeper with an SSC degree, 40 years old. His spouse completed SSC.	2012; Cox's Bazar, Rural
8	MD8	A principal officer at a private bank with an MSc degree, age 41. His ex-spouse has an MBA.	2011; Dhaka, Urban
9	MD9	An assistant professor with an MA from a private university, 40 years old. His ex-spouse holds an MA.	2015; Dhaka, Urban
10	MD10	An assistant professor with an MA from a private university, 40 years old. His ex-spouse has an MA.	2015; Chittagong, Urban
11	MD11	A shopkeeper with an SSC degree, 42 years old. His ex-spouse completed an SSC.	2016; Rangamati, Rural
12	MD12	A farmer with matriculation, 45 years old. His ex-spouse completed class eight.	2014; Vola, Rural
13	EX1	A lawyer and member of the Bangladesh Bar Council with an LLB, 50 years old. Law practice experience of more than 25 years.	
14	EX2	An Islamic scholar with a PhD in Islamic Jurisprudence, 51 years old, a university professor.	
15	EX3	A local government representative and an elected Union Parishad chairman, age 50. Holds a BA and is involved in ADR.	
16	EX4	A Khatib (Friday sermon speaker), an assistant professor of Islamic Studies at a private university with a PhD degree, 45 years old.	
17	EX5	A social worker with an MA, 44 years old. Founded an NGO and involved in ADR. 10 years' experience.	

Table 2

Thematic Summary (Theme–Subtheme–Example Quote)

No.	Theme	Subtheme	Illustrative Quotes
1	Psychological Distress of Male Divorcees	Depression, loneliness, identity crisis	MD1 said that "I felt like I lost my purpose after my divorce. I was meant to be the provider and protector; now I'm simply a failure in my family's eyes".
		Social isolation	MD3 observed that "It felt like everyone started treating me differently once the divorce happened."
		Maladaptive coping (substance use)	MD7 confessed that "After the divorce, I began drinking heavily. It was the only method I could use to dull the agony. I did not know how to handle the rage and sadness any longer."
		Positive post-divorce growth	MD5 said that "I enjoyed a chance to start over after the divorce. I started concentrating on growing my career and pursuing my long-neglected interests. Realizing I was in control of my future gave me strength. Six months later, I met a woman I had always wished for; I have never been happier."
2	Social Stigmatization and Economic Hardship	Social stigma	MD3 shared the fact that "People started treating me differently after my divorce. My family viewed me critically, and my friends turned away. I felt like I was no longer taken seriously, even at work. My divorce seemed to define who I was."
		Economic hardship	MD3 clarified that "The divorce drained me financially. In addition to paying alimony, I had to pay large legal fees. I also had to take time off for court hearings and other related matters, which negatively affected my ability to maintain my job."
3	Victimization through False Legal Allegations	Negative impacts	MD9 said that "I was falsely accused of domestic violence and was made to offer a dowry that did not exist. The stigma and pressure made me an outsider. It ruined my reputation, and in the end, I lost friends and career opportunities."
		Positive outcomes	EX1 mentioned, "I handled a case in which a woman paid hefty legal fees without providing evidence to support her unfounded allegations. The male divorcee was found innocent in spite of her efforts."
4	Intergenerational Impact on Children	Emotional distress	EX5 reported a 9-year-old girl who was denied her father's love and care: "The girl used to be lively and outgoing, but after the divorce, she became withdrawn. Fearing what others would think of her family, she declined to go outside and stopped engaging in everyday activities. She experienced emotional distress due to the stigma associated with having a father she couldn't see because her mother wouldn't allow her to meet him."
		Peer pressure and stigma	MD2, MD3, EX1, EX2, EX3, EX4, and EX5 said that if false claims against the fathers have gone public, children could have suffered bullying, mockery, or discrimination stemming from their family situation following their parents' divorce.
		Educational disturbance and economic effects	Most respondents underlined the significant financial effects of divorce in Bangladesh, especially for male divorcees who typically lose a large amount of their income or assets during court processes.
		Future relationships	MD9 said, "I only got to see my daughter on weekends, but her mother always painted me as the villain. Growing up believing I was a bad person, my daughter as a young adult now views marriage quite negatively. Having seen the devastation of her parents' marriage, she once said she did not believe in love or relationships."
		Long-term social and cultural consequences	EX5 noted that "Children of divorced parents frequently struggle with cultural expectations and the reality of crushed families. Societal stigma pushes them to challenge conventional values and fight for family rights and equality, therefore demanding a more open-minded attitude to relationships."
5	Lack of Institutional Support and Need for Reform	Absence of mental health and legal support	EX2 said that "Laws are occasionally misused, such as false abuse claims, and men are usually at a disadvantage in financial and custody concerns."

Psychological Distress of Male Divorcees

Depression, Loneliness, and Identity Crises

Loss of conventional masculine roles aggravates Bangladeshi male divorcees' deep psychological suffering, including depression, loneliness, and reduced self-worth, consequently promoting feelings of isolation (Islam, 2019; Mirzadjanovna, 2022; Ngambi et al., 2023). MD1 said that "I felt like I lost my purpose after my divorce. I was meant to be the provider and protector; now I'm simply a failure in my family's eyes", reflecting the emotional price of losing conventional roles. Studies show that divorced men suffer psychological pain as a result of the difficulties and crises following their marriage breakup (Johnson & Wu, 2002). MD3 observed that "It felt like everyone started treating me differently once the divorce happened," stressing the social isolation many men suffer.

Maladaptive Coping

Some men resort to maladaptive mechanisms of coping such as drug abuse. MD7 confessed that he started drinking heavily after the divorce, saying it was the only way he could muffle the pain. MD6 also said that he began to do it (drinking) daily and could not stop.

The findings of a previous meta-analysis indicate that people who are divorced are less healthy and more prone to physical issues, such as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases (Pellón-Elexpuru et al., 2024). MD1 said that his blood pressure had gone through the roof since he was divorced and he had type 2 diabetes. The chronic mental health problems of men are significantly attributed to child custody disputes (Barry & Liddon, 2020). MD2 stated, "The constant battle to visit my children has taken a mental toll on me."

A matter of concern is the fact that there is an increased premature death rate among divorced men, which is particularly alarming. Sbarra et al. (2011) discovered that the risk of premature death was significantly higher in divorced men, particularly young ones, compared to married men.

Many of the male divorcees became sad and traumatized by their lack of custody. MD2, MD3, and MD4 elucidated how the absence of their children made them very depressed. EX5 recounted how some mothers deliberately conceal their children from their fathers as a means of revenge, therefore aggravating the negative consequences of divorce.

Positive Post-divorce Growth

However, not all experiences are negative. Some men grow personally and become emotionally strong. MD1 stated that while at first it was impossible to overcome the pain, after some time he began to think about remarriage and noticed everything he had never seen before. "It made me a better person." MD10 focused on exercise and well-being. After his divorce, MD5 said that he had an opportunity to begin again. Six months later, he met the woman he had always wanted. He said he had never been happier. EX5 observed that psychological strength increases over time as men develop coping mechanisms to face future challenges.

Social Stigmatization and Economic Hardship of Male Divorcees in Bangladesh

Social Stigma

A common theme across settings, social stigma significantly shapes how people respond to health problems, social inclusion, and mental well-being (Balan, 2024; Bowen, 2017; Patil et al., 2023). Most of the study respondents indicated that, in most cases in Bangladesh, where divorce is greatly stigmatized in society, male divorcees tend to face negative responses in their communities, extended families, and professional fields. Several studies demonstrate that divorce can not only declassify people but also restrict them in terms of securing jobs, remarrying, and being part of the community. Although divorce is becoming a more

accepted phenomenon, it remains taboo, resulting in the social exclusion of both sexes, particularly men, who may experience a lack of social relationships and support structures (Afroz, 2019; Rahman et al., 2013). MD3 stated that after his divorce, people began to treat him differently. His relatives looked down upon him, and his friends deserted him. He felt he was no longer a serious person, even at work. His divorce seemed to define who he actually was.

Economic Hardship

Furthermore, there can be serious financial implications as divorced men frequently experience unstable finances, made worse by the patriarchal system that restricts their access to support networks and resources (Khan et al., 2022). Most respondents said legal fees, alimony obligations, and interrupted career paths cause financial strain and economic instability, becoming a major worry for many men. MD3, for instance, explained that "The divorce drained me financially. In addition to paying alimony, I had to pay large legal fees. I also had to take time off for court hearings and other related matters, which negatively affected my ability to maintain my job."

False Legal Allegation Victimization

Negative impacts

Fake cases of domestic abuse, dowry issues, and character assassination are some of the cases (Mares & Turvey, 2018) that often entrap male divorcees in Bangladesh. Accusations can lead to social exclusion, emotional suffering, and financial instability. The emotional and financial outcomes of false allegations can be terrible (Akter et al., 2024; Islam, 2019). MD9 stated that he has been wrongly accused of domestic violence and dowry in court. The stigma rendered him a foreigner, destroying his reputation and causing him to lose his friends and career opportunities.

Such a situation can be aggravated by the abuse of laws, such as the Dowry Prohibition Act (Akter et al., 2024). MD6, MD11, and MD12 described the manipulation and misuse of the laws protecting women. According to MD8, the legal process was like a nightmare. It not only drained all his funds, but also emotionally ruined him. Years passed without sleep for him following the false accusation.

Out of the twelve males interviewed who had divorced, six alleged false charges while two had been jailed. MD2 said that certain statements had ruined his college reputation and career. EX1, EX3, and EX5 presented insights into the effects of false accusations. EX1 claimed that most of the charges were unfounded and resulted in futile legal battles. According to EX5, false accusations have negatively affected the mental health and economic state of men, leading to professional difficulties and social isolation. The majority of the respondents said that 75 to 90 percent of allegations made by their wives after the divorce were false. Studies indicate that almost 80 percent of cases registered under the Dowry Prohibition Act are fake (Akter et al., 2024). EX1 claimed that damages were irreversible even in cases where the charges proved to be false. EX5 noted that such cases take years to come to fruition, and that the emotional impact and the court fees were high. There were also adverse effects on the relationships in the long term, as children were made to believe that fathers were criminals.

Positive Outcomes Following False Accusations

According to EX2, EX3, and EX5, male divorcees are relieved after having won battles against unjustified accusations. EX5 provided an example of a male client who was relieved after being cleared of allegations of abuse by his ex-wife. EX1 raised the issue of a woman having to pay expensive legal fees without providing evidence to support her unfounded allegations. Sometimes male divorcees can sue for compensation; for example, clients of EX1.

Intergenerational Impact on Children

Psychological and Emotional Distress

Male divorcees' children often go through emotional and mental torment and grieve just like those who are bereaved (Hughes, 2005; Leung & Robson, 1990; Tarroja et al., 2017; Wadsby & Svedin, 1994). EX1, EX3, and EX5 stated that these children feel confused, angry, and sad, especially when their parents are depicted unfavorably. EX5 introduced the case of a 9-year-old girl who rejected her father's love: when the girl was four years old, her parents divorced. She then refused to venture out and gave up all activities, suffering distress because of the stigma.

Peer Pressure and Social Stigma

Divorce social stigma often impacts children. MD2, MD3, EX1, EX2, EX3, EX4, and EX5 all reported that children might be bullied or discriminated against. EX5 gave an example of a 12-year-old boy who was bullied at school after his father was accused: his peers were constantly teasing the child, who was called by the name of the criminal's son. The stigma remained despite his father's exoneration. The child became lonely and started to skip school. It has been found that children with mental health issues face peer stigma, which leads to social isolation (Heary et al., 2017; Hendriks et al., 2022; O'Driscoll et al., 2012). It also affects their self-image and creates emotional ordeals (Adeyele, 2023; Ariani et al., 2023).

Educational Disturbance and Economic Effects

Children in families that have gone through divorce face disruption in their education and economics. They also suffer educational disadvantages, such as fewer chances of graduating from college (Brand et al., 2017, 2019; Suprianto et al., 2024). Family financial insecurity affects children's access to nutrition programs, health care, and education. Without support or forced changes, many are affected educationally. EX5 observed that children of divorced families may be forced to drop out or go to worse-quality schools since their education is no longer affordable.

Impact on Future Relationships

Divorced parents can cause families to have a difficult time, and their children may grow up focusing on negative sentiments towards their parents. Research shows that such children have low self-esteem and negative attitudes toward their parents (Bynum & Durm, 1996; Wiehe, 1984). Divorce also influences the relationship between adults; children from families that have faced divorce may have negative attitudes towards marriage (Foo, 2021; Hughes, 2007; Ottaway, 2010; Riggio, 2004).

Most of the male divorcees said that their children were in the hands of their mothers after the divorce and that fathers have no access to them. Mothers may paint ex-husbands in a negative light, which will influence how children perceive them. MD9 said his daughter's mother always made him the villain, and as a result, his daughter had a negative opinion of marriage. She even added that she did not believe in relationships or love. EX3 explained that custody arrangements limited fathers' involvement. Mothers sometimes criticized former husbands in front of their children. Children are now cautious about getting married and doubt the durability of relationships.

Long-term Social and Cultural Consequences

The intergenerational effects of divorce in Bangladesh change societal norms. Children who have divorced parents often face social judgment (EX1, EX2, EX3, EX4, and EX5), which makes them socially aware and maybe family rights activists. As EX5 observed, societal stigmatization forces them to challenge traditional values and struggle to protect family rights and equality. EX3 remarked that most people lose interest in traditional family formation and begin to doubt cultural values.

Lack of Institutional Support and Need for Reform

There was consensus among the respondents that there is a lack of institutional support for divorced men, particularly in terms of mental health services, social counseling, and unbiased legal protection. MD6 said he was completely lonely after his divorce, while MD2 stated that he had to fight to visit his children and that there was no convenient counseling available. EX5 observed that both divorced men and women were stigmatized and did not receive adequate assistance, while EX2 added that the laws were sometimes abused with men in a disadvantaged position. EX3 also stated that resources were insufficient and that public systems neglected emotional suffering.

Not all experiences recounted, however, were negative. MD1, MD5, and MD10 demonstrated personal growth, emotional and physical independence without formal counseling. These benefits were made possible by strengthened social support structures and career building. The observations indicated that proving accusations untrue relieved and vindicated successful men, with some seeking legal resolution to recover losses and restore dignity.

Discussion

The results highlight the significant psychological, social, and financial challenges that face male divorcees in Bangladesh and the generational effects of these challenges. The findings contribute to understanding divorce in the Bangladeshi context, the need for comprehensive change, and the provision of post-divorce support systems.

The male divorcees expressed their emotional distress, depression, loneliness, and identity crises, which are frequently the result of the loss of the traditional masculine role of provider (Cleary, 2019; Eggenberger et al., 2021; Hossain, 2023; Whitley, 2021). These findings correspond to the stress-diathesis model, which assumes that major life transitions, such as divorce, may cause psychological disorders, particularly in cases when they are accompanied by social rejection and economic hardships (Pearlin et al., 1981). Social seclusion and poor coping strategies such as substance misuse are signs of mental health care requiring specific attention (Farahani et al., 2022).

The marginalization of male divorcees in families, communities, and workplaces due to social stigma related to divorce in Bangladesh is a consequence of the post-divorce situation (Afroz, 2019; Rahman et al., 2013). It aligns with Goffman and Cliff's (1964) theory of spoiled identity, in which the divorcee is considered an outcast from traditional families. This stigma adds more psychological pain and makes it difficult to be reintegrated into society. Economic hardships (payments to lawyers and alimony) also support the need for fair legal systems (Kaufman & Johnson, 2004; Nawaz et al., 2021).

False prosecution, especially based on domestic violence or dowry issues, has a tremendous psychological and social impact. Such accusations often lead to long, expensive court cases, reinforcing the notion of "legal instrumentalism"—the abuse of laws to serve selfish interests (Sarat & Felstiner, 1986). The aspect of false accusations can erode the father-child relationship because most fathers are wrongly accused of being criminals, exacerbating the suffering between generations (Baker & Ben-Ami, 2011).

Divorce stigmatization often causes emotional distress to the children of male divorcees, such as confusion and bullying (Dicu, 2024; Dilla & Wado, 2024). It is in line with the cumulative disadvantage theory formulated by Merton (1988), which posits that initial life disturbances such as parental divorce lead to cumulative negative consequences (Thomas & Högnäs, 2015). Disadvantages are often driven by financial instability that affects children's education (Brand et al., 2019).

This research findings correspond to the coping and stress model developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). First, male divorcees employed emotion-focused coping mechanisms of withdrawal/avoidance because of social stigma, legal uncertainties, and access to children. In the long run, some shifted to adaptive coping, including self-reflection, exercise, and promotion, which reflect the psychologically adaptive trait of active coping and are noted to mediate recovery after divorce (Amato, 2010). Complementarily, resilience theory operationalizes such consequences as the result of dynamically procedural positive adaptation (Bonanno, 2004; Masten, 2001). Informal social support networks act as protective factors, increasing emotional control, independence, and long-term resilience even with minimal formal psychological interventions (Ungar, 2011).

In line with the posttraumatic growth (PTG) theory, divorce is a major psychological stressor that can derail fundamental assumptions regarding identity, relationship, and belonging (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Alongside negative impacts, some participants described beneficial changes, such as heightened emotional awareness, enhanced self-perception, and renewed purpose, which fall within the domains of PTG (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). This development was neither general nor instantaneous but was conditional upon the contemplation of agony.

Religious coping and spirituality enabled adjustment and meaning-making. The respondents used positive religious coping mechanisms, which included prayer and the perception of divorce as a trial by God, which supported acceptance, emotional resilience, and hope in a setting that did not offer formal psychological assistance, as proposed in Pargament's (2001) theory of religious coping (J. Xu, 2016). Nevertheless, religious coping did not consistently contribute to adaptive coping; in other situations, it involved a spiritual interpretation that promoted patience rather than emotional expression or seeking help, showing that religious coping has dual potential (Pargament et al., 2011).

According to the participants, one of the problems was the lack of institutional support for male divorcees in mental health facilities, social counseling, and legal assistance. Societal views of the emotional capabilities of men develop gendered oversight in post-divorce support. Lack of support makes distress and stigma even more intolerable; reforms providing equal support to men and women who experience a divorce are essential.

In this context, the findings may also be interpreted through the lens of positive psychology, particularly posttraumatic growth, and self-efficacy. Positive psychology focuses on human resilience in the face of major events, adaptation, and psychological development or growth (Aini et al., 2021; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Tessy et al., 2022). While most participants experienced emotional fluctuations and social isolation at first, some showed resilience through emotional adjustment, increased self-awareness, and regained independence. In addition, the results also echo aspects of posttraumatic growth theory, which posits that extremely stressful events can lead to positive psychological changes (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). The participants who reported higher levels of self-reflection, career development, and personal fulfillment after their divorce were found to have characteristics of post-traumatic growth, such as improved self-perception and a sense of purpose. Bandura's (1997) notion of self-efficacy also helps to explain that as male divorcees adapt their lives and achieve personal goals, they gain confidence and a sense of control.

This study, the conclusions reveal the complexity of male suffering in Bangladesh after

divorce and promote the thorough reconsideration of the impact of divorce in research, legislative reforms, and psychological treatment.

A limitation of the research is that less educated and rural male divorcees are underrepresented. The sample skews toward educated, urban employees, with seven out of ten having a Master's degree or above and five of the ten being professors. This disproportion limits generalizability, since rural or less-educated male divorcees may face distinct, and potentially more significant, psychological, social, and economic concerns. The sample should be more diverse to provide a more complete picture of post-divorce experiences across different socioeconomic and geographic contexts.

In addition, this qualitative design relies on subjective experiences and perceptions that may be affected by recall bias or personal interpretation. The study was also limited to male divorcees and selected professionals, so it did not examine the views of other institutional actors, children, or former spouses.

However, despite these limitations, the study has significant practical and theoretical implications. It reveals the necessity of having specialized mental health and counseling services for male divorcees through government, NGO, or mosque-based intervention. Second, the results highlight the need for legal frameworks that can be implemented in a gender-neutral and transparent manner to manage divorce-related disputes and to prevent protective laws from being misused. Third, public awareness campaigns are needed to counteract negative attitudes regarding masculinity, emotional vulnerability, and divorce stigma. Fourth, it is necessary to establish institutional and community-based support programs to protect the children affected by divorce through emotional, educational, and psychological support. Lastly, the study highlights the need for more comprehensive social reintegration strategies, such as the economic rehabilitation of women, the restoration of family ties, and community education via religious and social institutions to assist women in the reintegration process and promote their well-being after divorce.

This study contributes to the limited literature in the field of male divorcees in Bangladesh, combining both psychological and sociological aspects to understand post-divorce experiences. It builds upon the cumulative disadvantage theory of Merton (1988), which highlights the psychological, social, and economic disadvantages that divorce and subsequent legal entanglements involve and that over time result in further disadvantages for those who have divorced and, in some instances, for their children (Thomas & Högnäs, 2015). The results are also consistent with the theory of Goffman and Cliffs (1964) concerning spoiled identity, as a contentious divorce process and false allegations lead to the degradation of reputation and social exclusion, and continuing stigmatization (Akter et al., 2024). In addition, the study contributes to stress and coping theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) by demonstrating both maladaptive and adaptive coping in response to emotional distress and social pressures. It is also consistent with the theory of resilience (Masten, 2001) and the theory of posttraumatic growth (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004), as reflected in the participants' emotional adaptation, self-awareness, and personal growth. Finally, Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory is supported by the results, which indicate regained self-confidence and perceived control through adaptive adjustment and attainment.

Conclusion

The research contextualizes the lives of divorced men in Bangladesh in the context of psychological concepts, highlighting the distress due to divorce as a pervasive phenomenon in which the men suffer from depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and identity crisis. The breakdown of culturally defined masculine roles, such as

marital authority, provision and social position, can create role strain and emotional dysregulation, coupled with social stigma and marginalization, can create a significant role strain and emotional dysregulation. The negative experience of being engaged in conflict with adversarial legal systems, for example, or in false accusations of domestic violence and dowry cases, can lead to chronic psychosocial trauma and present as hyper-vigilance, rumination, emotional numbing, and avoidance. Gender norms that discourage women from sharing their feelings and seeking help for issues, as well as norms that encourage men to be stoic, can increase the likelihood of distress relating to somatic symptoms, substance misuse, and untreated mental health problems, emphasizing the critical need for mental health services that are gender-responsive and trauma-informed.

The research also highlights intergenerational impacts with serious implications. The transmission of stress, the disruption of attachment bonds, and dysfunctional parenting all increase the risk of emotional, academic, and social maladjustment in children whose parents are divorced, risks that are exacerbated by the stigmatization of legal and social discourses. The results highlight the loopholes in the mental health, legal, and social support systems of Bangladesh. It is essential to integrate various reforms, including trauma-informed care, legal protections, father-involved supports, and stigma reduction strategies, to support individual healing, child health, well-being, and societal resilience.[]

Author Contribution Statement

Mohammad Amimul Ahsan: Conceptualization; Formal Analysis; Investigation; Validation; Writing Original Draft. **Saber Ahmad:** Conceptualization; Data Curation; Resources; Writing, Review & Editing; References. **H. M. Ataur Rahman Nadwi:** Conceptualization; Data Curation; Resources; Writing, Review & Editing; Supervision. **Mohammad Jaweed Iqbal:** Formal Analysis; Methodology; Writing, Review & Editing; References. **Helal Uddin Md. Noman:** Data Curation; Writing, Review & Editing; Supervision. **Shaikhul Azam Abrar:** Data Curation; Investigation; Validation; Writing, Review & Editing; Proofreading.

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