



A Comparative Study of Academic Resilience, Academic Self-Efficacy and Social Skills in Students with Divorced and Normal Parents

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Abstract: The effect of family background on children's behaviors and emotions has been confirmed in various studies. One of the negative experiences affecting the development of adolescents is divorce of parents. The current study aimed to compare academic resilience, academic self-efficacy and social skills in students with divorced and normal parents in Bandar Lengeh city (Iran). Participants were 108 students (62 students with normal parents and 46 students with divorced parents) who selected by purposive sampling method. Academic Resilience Questionnaire (Samuels, 2004), College Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (Owen & Froman, 1988) and Teenage inventory of social skills (Inderbitzen & Foster) were used for collecting data. The data was analyzed using the multivariate analysis of variance test (MANOVA). The results indicated there is a significant difference between students with divorced and normal parents in resilience ($P<0.05$), self-efficacy ($P<0.05$) and social skills ($P<0.05$). According the results, students with normal parents had higher scores in the dependent variables. The findings have beneficial implications for psychologists and counselors active in the field of child and adolescent counseling, especially in divorced families.

Keywords: Academic resilience, academic self-efficacy, social skills, divorced and normal parents

Introduction

Changes in the family structure are often accompanied by pressure and stress for all family members, especially children, in such a way that the increase in economic, social and psychological problems is one of the consequences of divorce and parents separation (Martínez-Pampliega et al., 2015). In the discussions related to children of divorce, the concept of resilience is considered as a dynamic and supportive factor that helps a person to adapt positively to the conditions, including the problems of being away from parents. In a qualitative research among 22 young adults (20–25 years old) whose parents divorced during their childhood conducted by Eldar-Avidan et al. (2009), qualitative analysis reached an identification of three profiles, aiming at a grounded theoretical conceptualization. Three core themes were identified: the centrality of the family; short- and long-term implications of parental divorce and its relations to supportive coping resources; and perspective at young adulthood. Additional analysis led to characterizing participants by three profiles, which represent the grounded theoretical conceptualizations: resilience, survival, and vulnerability. The most prominent difference among the profiles was the relationships between participants and their parents, and their perception of

ongoing parental responsibility. The most prominent differences are in the way people communicate with their parents and how they understand the current responsibility.

The concept of resilience has been defined as a resource to facilitate overcoming adversity, problems, resistance to stress and eliminating its psychological effects ([Dahl et al., 2015](#)). Another factor affecting the academic success of students is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is different according to students' feelings of thinking and action. Self-efficacy is the perception of individual capabilities in order to achieve the functions and results of other predetermined situations and is a concept through which people's experiences, ability and thinking are carried out in one direction ([Ocak & Karafil, 2020](#)). In general, students who have more confidence in their skills and abilities show a double effort in performing academic tasks. As a result, their performance in doing homework is better ([Brown et al., 2016](#)). Considering that Bandura considers self-efficacy as a factor that acts as a cognitive mediator and affects people's cognition, feelings and thoughts, obtaining a result that shows the low level of self-efficacy in students from divorced families are not far from expected; Because these students experience a family environment with conflict, family differences and negative events, when they are exposed to new experiences or stressful academic situations, the feeling of low self-efficacy does not help them to manage and control that event and situation ([Esmaeili et al., 2019](#); [Motamedi et al., 2019](#)).

On the other hand, the family plays a very important role in the formation of the social habits and thoughts of its children, and the influence of the family on various dimensions of their social development is undeniable. Social skill is a set of learned behaviors that enable a person to have an effective relationship with others and avoid unreasonable social reactions. Cooperation, sharing with others, helping, being the initiator of a relationship, asking for help, praising and appreciating are examples of this type of behavior. Learning the above behaviors and creating an effective relationship with others is one of the most important achievements of childhood. Unfortunately, not all children succeed in learning this skill, for this reason, most of these children face negative reactions from adults and other children ([Ghamari Givi & Khoshnoodniay Chomachaei, 2016](#)). Social skills are learned and specific behaviors that people use in interpersonal situations to acquire or maintain education from their environment. When we think in this way, social skills can be considered as a highway to reach one's goals ([Malekzadeh et al., 2022](#)).

Researchers have found that the process and actions of the family, such as the quality of parent-child communication, have a great impact on the feeling of self-worth and social adequacy in childhood. They have found that the methods of fostering children have a great impact on many psychological aspects, including identity development, social adaptation, self-esteem, success in work, and reduction of behavioral problems. Parents with the style of their rearing and the attitude they have towards the abilities and capabilities of their children cause the children to reach beliefs about their abilities and skills. By affecting children's self-efficacy, they affect their social skills and the weakening of family foundations causes destructive consequences that overshadow children's social skills.

[Rix et al. \(2022\)](#) concluded in their research that although newly divorced parents feel distress and anxiety in the early stages, if they have enough support and time to stabilize in their new life, their parental self-efficacy increases and they gain more confidence in their parenting abilities. [Hutauruk et al. \(2019\)](#) also acknowledged that resilience is different in children with similar problems such as parental divorce. For example, one of the respondents had excellent emotional regulation while facing the divorce of his parents; while the other had poor emotional regulation. On the other hand, the level of optimism among children also decreased due to the divorce of their parents. Researchers such as [Sorek \(2019\)](#) showed that parental conflict (from both the children and parents' perspective), perceived gap in conflict intensity between marriage and divorce (from the parents' perspective) and high self-blame were negatively associated with the children's evaluations of their quality of life, whereas active coping was positively associated with it. Also, regarding the social skills, [Ghamari Givi and Khoshnoodniay Chomachaei \(2016\)](#) in a research titled comparing social skills, mental health and academic performance in children with divorced parents, applicants for divorce and normal parents, concluded that physical symptoms, anxiety, impairment in social functioning, depression and general mental disorder are significantly higher in children with divorced parents and divorce applicants than in children with normal parents.

In general, the examination of the personality characteristics of normal students with students from divorced families indicates that normal students have a relatively favorable family environment and have a positive attitude and a good motivation for academic progress. On the other hand, students from divorced families, in spite of benefiting from higher than average IQ and suitable living facilities do not show significant effort and do not have the motivation for academic advancement. Most of these students have had unpleasant and exhausting experiences of threats, humiliation, punishment and unkindness from their families, and due to the existence of various family conflicts, they have endured a lot of psychological pressure. Their successful peers are not much different, but they are not enthusiastic about academic affairs and mostly have a kind of academic reluctance; therefore, the role of the family and its emotional climate is very important in the academic status of students and can have a major impact on the progress or lack of progress of students ([Saeidi & Ebrahimi Farshchi, 2012](#)). Consequently, the present research seeks to find out whether psychological characteristics such as academic resilience, academic self-efficacy and social skills are different in the children of divorced and normal parents.

Material and Methods

The present study is a causal-comparative research. The target population in the present study included all adolescents aged 14-18 years with divorced and normal parents in Bandar Lenge city (Iran) in 2022. The sample consisted of 108 adolescents with divorced and normal parents (62 teenagers with non-divorced parents and 46 teenagers with divorced parents). Adolescents with divorced parents were selected by purposive sampling and adolescents with normal parents were selected by accessible sampling method.

In this research, Academic Resilience Inventory (ARI) ([Samuels, 2004](#)) was used to collect data related to resilience variable. In its Iranian norm, which was set by [Soltaninejad et al. \(2014\)](#), the number of questions in this questionnaire was reduced to 29 questions, and finally three components of communication skills, future orientation, and problem-oriented/positive were extracted from it. It should be noted that in this questionnaire, out of 29 items, questions (4-5-7-10-11-14-15-23-27-28-29) are scored in a reverse way. In this study, the participants were asked to rate their resilience on a five-point Likert scale from completely disagree (1) to completely agree (5). In the present study, the reliability coefficient of the resilience tool was found to be 0.77 using Cronbach's alpha.

In order to measure academic self-efficacy, the College Academic Self-Efficacy Scale ([Owen & Froman, 1988](#)) was used. This scale has 33 statements and ranges from very low to very high, which is scored based on a 5-point Likert scale. Due to the fact that statement 28 is related to the laboratory and not all subjects have a laboratory course, this question has been omitted in the Persian version. Based on this, the number of statements has been reduced to 32 questions. In the Iranian sample, the internal consistency of the whole test is 0.91 (Cronbach's Alpha). The validity of this questionnaire has been checked and verified using exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis. In the present study, the reliability coefficient of the self-efficacy tool was obtained using Cronbach's alpha as 0.75.

Teenage inventory of social skills ([Inderbitzen & Foster, 1992](#)) which contains 39 five-choice statements, was used to evaluate social skills. The subject expresses his answer for each statement in a range of options from not at all to always true. This questionnaire has two subscales of the positive behaviors section, including statements 18, 24, 24, 15, 26, 28, 29, 30, 33, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, 17, 15, 11, 9, 7, 6, 3 and negative behaviors section includes 2, 1, 4, 5, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 27, 31, 32 items. The validity of this scale was reported by [Inderbitzen and Foster \(1992\)](#) to be 0.90. Convergence validity of this questionnaire in different ways such as comparing it with self-assessment information, peer assessment and sociometrist data and its diagnostic validity by examining the correlation between social skills scores and social desirability, economic, social and other status paper-pencil instruments were evaluated by [Inderbitzen and Foster \(1992\)](#) and the obtained results indicated the convergent validity and acceptable diagnostic validity of this questionnaire. Shiri et al. (2012) reported the validity and reliability of this questionnaire as favorable. In the present study, the reliability coefficient of the social skills tool was found to be 0.79 using Cronbach's alpha.

The data collected by the scales of academic resilience, academic self-efficacy and social skills were entered into SPSS software (version 24). Then, descriptive statistics indices, mean, standard deviation and minimum and maximum scores were calculated. In the descriptive section, frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation, and in the inferential section, Multivariate variance analysis test (MANOVA) was used.

In this research, the participants were assured that the results of this research will be used solely for the promotion of scientific research, and for this reason, there is no need to mention names and personal detail.

Results

Based on the demographic findings, the statistical sample of the current study can be considered an almost homogeneous sample in the variables of gender, educational level, parents' status, and parents' educational qualifications. The statistical sample based on the education degree of the parents is mostly focused on the bachelor's degree. The average age of the participants in the research was 16.83, which indicates the homogeneity of the sample in age variable.

Table 1 reports the descriptive statistics indicators such as mean, standard deviation, maximum score, minimum score, skewness and kurtosis for the research variables separately for students with divorced parents and students with normal parents.

Table 1. Descriptive indices of the research variables according to the status of students' parents (with and without divorce)

Group		Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Academic resiliency	Normal parents	35	118	85.33	8.93	-1.23	0.87
	Divorced parents	31	89	59.41	14.11	-0.81	-1.06
	Total	31	118	70.45	11.32	-1.06	-0.23
Academic self-efficacy	Normal parents	56	141	107.65	18.91	0.55	0.43
	Divorced parents	39	98	64.03	23.15	0.81	0.73
	Total	39	141	89.07	20.73	0.74	0.69
Social skills	Normal parents	59	173	121.09	19.23	1.27	1.05
	Divorced parents	31	132	83.98	24.47	1.14	1.87
	Total	31	173	106.84	22.27	1.33	1.54

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) test was used to check the research hypotheses. To use the test, it is necessary to check and confirm the relevant assumptions:

- The W statistic in the Shapiro-Wilk test for any of the research variables was not at the conventional significance level ($P > 0.05$) and therefore the assumption of normality of the data was confirmed.
- The F statistic in Lewen's test for all of the variables (dependent variables) was not considered at a significant level ($P > 0.05$) and therefore the homogeneity of variances was assumed.
- The F statistic was not considered significant in M-box test ($P > 0.05$) and therefore the assumption of homogeneity of covariance matrices was confirmed.
- In this research, to identify outlier data, Mahalanobis distance was first calculated for all subjects. Using the desired degree of freedom and confidence level, the value of 5.991 was extracted in the chi-square table. On the other hand, the highest Mahalanobis distance obtained in the statistical analysis of this research was 5.719. By comparing these two numbers, it was found that no data in the Mahalanobis distances is higher than the obtained chi-square value, and as a result, there is no outlier data. Table 2 shows the results of multivariate analysis of variance.

Table 2. Results of multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA)

Test	DF1	DF2	Value	F	p	Eta
Pillai's trace	3	102	0.582	9.416	0.001	0.594
Wilks' lambda	3	102	0.279	9.416	0.001	0.594
Hotelling's trace	3	102	1.486	9.416	0.001	0.594
Roy's largest root	3	102	1.486	9.416	0.001	0.594

As can be seen in Table 2, the Wilkes Lambda statistic ($F=9.416$) was at a favorable significance level ($P<0.05$). Based on the present findings, it can be concluded that the sample groups (students with normal parents and students with divorced parents) differ in at least one of the dependent variables (academic resilience, academic self-efficacy and social skills). Also, the ETA index shows that there is a good effect size in the analysis. In the one-variable analysis of variance test, it is determined exactly whether there is a difference between the two groups in each of the variables or not. Table 3 shows the results of one way analysis of variance for each of the research variables.

Table 3. Univariate analysis of variance test results for research variables

Variable	Between group DF	Within group DF	F	p	ETA
Academic resiliency	1	104	15.60	0.001	0.803
Academic self-efficacy	1	104	12.14	0.009	0.598
Social skills	1	104	12.89	0.006	0.612

Table 3 reports the value of Fisher's statistic for the variables of academic resilience, academic self-efficacy and social skills at an acceptable level ($P<0.05$). These findings mean that a significant difference has been observed between the two independent groups in this research in the mentioned variables, and according to Table 1, it was determined that the students with normal parents compare to students with divorced parents have a better level of academic resilience, academic self-efficacy and social skills, and according to it, the hypothesis of the current research is confirmed.

Discussion

Our results indicated that students with normal parents have a better level of academic resilience, academic self-efficacy and social skills than students with divorced parents. This finding is in agreement with the researches of [Hutauruk et al. \(2019\)](#), [Rix et al. \(2022\)](#), [Afifi et al. \(2015\)](#) and [Amato and Anthony \(2014\)](#).

In explaining the results of this research in the field of resilience, it can be said that the atmosphere in the family can be the foundation of a permanent connection between people. Attachment to parents and family members is often lifelong which serve as a model for relationships in the larger world such as the neighborhood, school, and community. In fact, the family atmosphere is one of the most important pillars of children's development and plays a significant role in developmental aspects,

especially resilience in stressful situations. This means that a person has received a capacity to resist stress and disaster and can finally deal with the stressful problems of life ([Sabeti Fard & Hajiarbabi, 2019](#)). Divorce is one of the factors that can leave an undeniable impact on the family atmosphere. Divorce, in addition to mental injuries and life troubles, leaves behind children who, due to upbringing in unfavorable mental, social and physical conditions, did not enjoy a normal state and are prone to any mental problems such as depression, aggression, mood, obsessions and anxiety. Due to the damage caused to all family members, especially children, the phenomenon of divorce reduces their resilience and psychological resistance and makes them more vulnerable. On the other hand, in divorced families, due to the lack of a parent, existing family conflicts, inefficient interaction patterns and economic problems hinder the involvement and effective participation of parents, which ultimately results in a drop in academic performance, a decrease in motivation, non-observance of school rules and failure to solve problems correctly and lack of resilience. In addition to that, children mainly create issues to become a means to reconnect with parents. Also, it seems that children with low academic performance seek revenge for their anger or revenge on their parents, or consider academic problems as an opportunity to receive their parents' attention.

In terms of the difference in the variable of self-efficacy, it can also be acknowledged; according to [Bandura \(2006\)](#), people's self-efficacy beliefs play an important role in how they view different situations. Academic self-efficacy is a type of self-efficacy that is completely flexible and is one of the factors of success in educational environments that has an impact on how people work in performing certain tasks and their success predicts future educational success. Academic self-efficacy includes specific psychological consequences such as achievement motivation, exam anxiety, and success in stressful situations ([Putwain et al., 2020](#)).

The feeling of self-efficacy motivates teenagers to deal with assignments, existing adverse conditions and upcoming challenges. Teenagers with high self-efficacy appear energetic and believe that they can overcome problems and challenges. People with high self-efficacy have higher vitality and academic performance due to using more effort and insisting on solving problems. In general, students with high perceived self-efficacy consider academic problems as an opportunity for success and are eager to acquire the necessary skills to solve any academic problem that may come their way. Therefore, if students believe that they will be successful in their studies, they will always strive to achieve their goals and will probably face successful results in the future ([Keshtvarz Kondazi & Fooladchang, 2022](#)). [Sorek \(2019\)](#) showed that teenagers who perceive themselves as successful, effective and capable perform better in difficult activities and challenging situations, and of course their sense of self-efficacy is higher, and vice versa teenagers who lived in divorced families imagine themselves as

failed and ineffective, overwhelmed by difficult activities and situations and experience low self-efficacy ([Etminan et al., 2020](#)).

In case of social skills, family is the main unit and the first environment for the development and upbringing of the child's personality, the subsequent adaptation of the individual to the society and the center of the formation of their identity. The family is considered the first founder of the personality, values and intellectual standards of people ([Samiee Zafarghandi & Zare' Bidaki, 2021](#)). Now, if such an important and fateful foundation undergoes conflict and transformation, of course the future of the children will also undergo changes. One of the important factors that can be the basis of this transformation is the divorce of parents and the conflicts that come with it.

Divorce of the parents leads to limiting the child's relationship with the social and kinship networks with which he previously had a relationship. Most of the people who were close to each other from the child's point of view are no longer close to each other and sometimes they even become enemies, and this distance and enmity creates a kind of pessimism and mistrust in the child. Also, the feeling of being forced to choose one of the parents in children leads to the formation of conflict, which makes the attachment more insecure and the child's anxiety more. There are changes that lead to the instability of parental duties and ultimately endanger the psychological well-being of children. All these factors, which are negative consequences of divorce, cause the children of these families to fail in acquiring appropriate social skills and to have shortcomings and inadequacies in this field compared to other peers. In general, it can be said that parental divorce leads to the loss or weakening of the sense of commitment and belonging in children. The child is faced with conflicting methods and patterns and as a result, he is in a state of confusion, which causes a drop in self-confidence in the child and leads to tension, stress and disturbances.

The findings of the present research can help psychologists and family counselors to correctly formulate the problems of couples applying for divorce and provide the necessary solutions to face the challenges of children to each of the couples. Alongside the obtained findings, the present research has been associated with some limitations that most important of which is conducting a study on teenagers in Bandar Lenge and collecting data through self-report questionnaires. It is suggested to study samples from other cities and other age groups in future studies. Also, data collection methods such as interviews should be used for more validity results.

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