Akademik Tarih ve Düşünce Dergisi



Academic Journal of History and Idea ISSN: 2148-2292

12 (2) 2025

Araștırma Makalesi | Research Article Geliş tarihi |Received:17.10.2024 Kabul tarihi Accepted:23.03.2025 Yayın tarihi |Published:25.04.2025

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Atıf Künyesi | Citation Info

Hadjamar, B. & Djeckdel, S. (2025). Increasing the Rates of Khula Divorce phenomenon in Algerian Society (Causes and Impacts). Akademik Tarih ve Düşünce Dergisi, 12 (2), 1060-1072.

Increasing the Rates of Khula Divorce phenomenon in Algerian Society (Causes and Impacts)

Abstract

This study addresses the phenomenon of Khula divorce in Algerian society, which is considered a legal and social phenomenon that has been increasing in recent years. Statistics indicate that divorce cases rose from 13,000 cases in 2019 to 15,000 cases in 2020, reflecting a notable increase in this phenomenon. Khula Divorce, as a social phenomenon, is influenced by many social, economic, and cultural factors currently experienced in Algeria. Rapid socio-cultural and economic transformations play a significant role in changing family and social relationship patterns, which may lead to an increase in divorce cases. This phenomenon has serious implications for Algerian society, as it can affect family cohesion and stability, necessitating an in-depth study to understand its causes and consequences. It is important to approach this phenomenon with caution and to understand the underlying factors, whether they are economic, social, or cultural, in order to provide appropriate solutions that address this issue fundamentally. In summary, divorce in Algeria reflects profound transformations in society and requires serious attention from researchers and policymakers to understand its causes and effects, and to work on reducing its negative impacts on families and society as a whole.

Keywords: Khula, Divorce, Causes, Impacts, Algerian Society, Phenomenon



Cezayir Toplumunda Hula Boşanma Olgusunun Oranlarının Artması (Nedenleri ve Etkileri)

Öz

Bu çalışma, Cezayir toplumunda son yıllarda artan yasal ve sosyal bir fenomen olarak kabul edilen Khula boşanma olgusunu ele almaktadır. İstatistikler, boşanma vakalarının 2019'da 13.000'den 2020'de 15.000'e yükseldiğini ve bu olguda kayda değer bir artış olduğunu göstermektedir. Khula Sosyal bir olgu olarak boşanma, Cezayir'de hâlihazırda yaşanan birçok sosyal, ekonomik ve kültürel faktörden etkilenmektedir. Hızlı sosyo-kültürel ve ekonomik dönüşümler, boşanma vakalarında artışa yol açabilecek aile ve sosyal ilişki kalıplarının değişmesinde önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Bu olgu, aile bütünlüğünü ve istikrarını etkileyebileceği için Cezayir toplumu üzerinde ciddi etkilere sahiptir ve nedenlerini ve sonuçlarını anlamak için derinlemesine bir çalışma gerektirmektedir. Bu olguya ihtiyatla yaklaşmak ve ekonomik, sosyal veya kültürel olsun altta yatan faktörleri anlamak, bu sorunu temelden ele alan uygun çözümler sunmak için önemlidir. Özetle, Cezayir'de boşanma, toplumdaki derin dönüşümleri yansıtmakta ve nedenlerini ve etkilerini anlamak ve aileler ve bir bütün olarak toplum üzerindeki olumsuz etkilerini azaltmak için çalışmak üzere araştırmacıların ve politika yapıcıların ciddi ilgisini gerektirmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hula, Boşanma, Sebepler, Etkiler, Cezayir Toplumu, Fenomen

Introduction

Algerian Researchers have taken care to study social life in all communities because the family is considered the fundamental building block of any society and forms the nucleus of social life. Marriage is one of the most important social phenomena that directly affects individuals' lives; it is as old as humanity itself and is considered one of the most important bonds upon which societies are built. Additionally, the family is the main axis from which the construction of society begins, as it is the first environment in which an individual interacts with their social surroundings. Currently, families in modern society face numerous problems and challenges due to rapid social, economic, and technological changes. These changes have led to the emergence of issues that did not exist before, especially in families that have long been a stable and established institution. As a result of these changes, there have been widespread effects. These transformations have led to a radical change in the concept of family and its role in society, necessitating an in-depth study to understand these changes and their effects on the individual and society as a whole. In marriage, the absence of divorce remains the foundation, as divorce is considered an exceptional step rather than the norm. Divorce, in all its forms, requires deep thought, planning, and consultation, as it is not just a personal decision but has serious social repercussions. It shifts the family from a state of stability to discord, from calm to distress, negatively affecting individuals and society as a whole. In recent years, the phenomenon of khula has emerged as an increasing social and legal phenomenon, especially in Algerian society, where families live amid rapid socio-cultural and economic transformations. This phenomenon requires careful study to understand its causes and implications, particularly since it is considered one of the manifestations of family disintegration, which leads to the erosion of the values supporting the social structure.

1. Significance of the Study

This study holds substantial academic value by filling critical gaps in sociological and demographic research on divorce trends in Algeria, particularly regarding Khula as a distinct legal and social phenomenon, while advancing theoretical understanding of how rapid societal transformations-economic, cultural, and legal-reshape marital dissolution patterns. Beyond academia, it illuminates the societal impact of Khula divorce, exposing its effects on family structures—including shifts in gender roles, parent-child relationships, and intergenerational dynamics—and highlighting broader implications for social stability, as rising divorce rates may erode community cohesion and traditional support systems. The research also **carries** policy relevance, offering evidence-based insights to guide interventions such as marital counseling programs and legal reforms aimed at addressing root causes of divorce, while proposing strategies to mitigate negative consequences like economic hardship for singleparent households or child welfare concerns. Furthermore, it enhances cultural awareness by examining tensions between modernization (e.g., women's autonomy, economic pressures) and traditional marital norms, providing a nuanced perspective on societal change, and raising critical questions about how religious and legal frameworks-such as Islamic family law in Algeria—intersect with evolving social realities.

2. Hypotheses

This study operates under four central hypotheses: first, that economic instability manifested through unemployment and financial stress—serves as a primary driver behind the increasing prevalence of Khula divorce; second, that evolving gender roles and women's growing empowerment have contributed significantly to higher Khula rates as women increasingly exercise their legal right to seek marital dissolution; third, that broader cultural shifts, particularly the weakening of traditional family values, have intensified marital conflicts and normalized divorce as a viable solution; and fourth, that the relative legal accessibility of Khula—compared to traditional divorce procedures—has established it as the preferred mechanism for women seeking to terminate unhappy marriages. Together, these hypotheses frame the investigation of Khula divorce as a multifaceted phenomenon shaped by intersecting economic, social, cultural, and legal factors in contemporary Algerian society.

3. Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods research design to comprehensively investigate the Khula divorce phenomenon in Algeria. The quantitative component involves a statistical analysis of official divorce records (2019–2020 onward) to identify trends and patterns, supplemented by structured surveys targeting individuals who have experienced Khula divorce to gather demographic and socioeconomic data. The qualitative dimension comprises in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including family court judges, sociologists, and religious scholars, to explore professional perspectives on Khula's societal and legal implications, along with detailed case studies of affected families to understand the personal and relational impacts. Additionally, a documentary analysis examines legal texts, judicial rulings, and existing sociological literature to contextualize findings within Algeria's unique socio-legal framework. This triangulated approach ensures both empirical rigor and nuanced understanding of Khula divorce's multifaceted nature.

4. Research Objectives

This study seeks to identify the key social, economic, and cultural factors driving the rise of *Khula* divorce in Algeria, analyze its multifaceted impacts on family stability and broader societal structures, and explore the interplay of legal and religious dimensions shaping its practice within the Algerian context. By examining these dynamics, the research aims to propose actionable recommendations—targeting policymakers, community leaders, and religious institutions—to mitigate the negative consequences of *Khula* divorce and reinforce family cohesion, thereby contributing to both scholarly discourse and practical solutions for marital dissolution in a rapidly transforming society.

5. Research Problem

The increasing rates of Khula divorce in Algerian society reflect a significant social and legal shift, with divorce cases rising from 13,000 in 2019 to 15,000 in 2020. This phenomenon is influenced by rapid socio-cultural, economic, and legal transformations, leading to family instability. The study seeks to explore: *What are the socioeconomic, cultural, and legal causes behind the rising incidence of Khula divorce phenomenon in Algeria, and how does this phenomenon affect family cohesion and broader societal stability?*

6. Concepts of the study

6.1. Definition of Marriage

Terminologically from a scientific perspective, marriage is considered an ancient social institution that varies in forms and patterns across different cultures and societies. However, marriage can generally be defined as a legitimate relationship between two individuals (a man and a woman) based on agreement and understanding, aimed at building a family and ensuring the continuation of lineage (Mahda, 1994). Marriage is not just a relationship between two people; it is a social contract that involves mutual obligations between the spouses, as well as shared expectations to achieve emotional and social stability. This contract is expected to evolve over time to include raising children and providing a suitable environment for their growth.

In most cultures, marriage is regarded as one of the fundamental pillars of society, contributing to the maintenance of social cohesion and moral values. This means that marriage is not merely an emotional relationship between two individuals, but it also imposes social, economic, and legal obligations (Aljawhara, 1988).

6.2. Concept of Divorce

Divorce is the legal termination of the marital relationship, occurring when efforts to sustain the marriage fail. It is considered an exceptional solution in Islam, where reconciliation between spouses is encouraged before resorting to it.

7. Definition of Khula

7.1.Linguistically

The term "Khula" is derived from the verb " $\vec{\exists}$ khala," which means to take off or remove. It is said, "I took off the garment," meaning I removed it, and "the woman divorced her husband" if she redeemed herself from him with money that she pays to him. It is as if she is taking herself out of the marital relationship. This term resembles the idea of redemption, where the woman pays an amount of money to free herself from the marriage.

7.2. Legally

Khula is mentioned in the Holy Quran in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 229 (So if you fear that they will not be able to keep within the limits of Allah, then there is no blame upon either of them in what she gives up to secure her release) This means that if a woman fears that the limits of Allah will not be upheld in the marital relationship, she is not at fault for redeeming herself with money she pays to her husband in exchange for divorce.

7.3.Terminologically

Khula is the dissolution of the marriage contract by the word "khula," where the wife

waives some of her financial rights (such as the dowry or maintenance) in exchange for ending the marital relationship. It is considered one of the types of divorce, but it is initiated by the wife and involves the payment of financial compensation. It is a type of divorce, but before delving into its meaning, we must return to the concept of marriage and divorce. Divorce is the legal and legitimate termination of the marital relationship, while khula is the wife's request to dissolve the marriage in exchange for her waiver of some of her financial or other rights. In other words, Khula is the wife's request to dissolve the marriage in exchange for waiving some of her rights, such as the dowry or maintenance. Khula is sought when married life becomes impossible due to conflicts or incompatibility, and the wife wants to end the relationship without waiting for the husband's consent.

7.4.Types of Khula

7.4.1. Mutual Khula

Where the husband and wife agree to dissolve the marriage in exchange for the wife waiving some of her rights (Sanani, 2020).

7.4.2. Judicial Khula

When the wife files a Khula lawsuit in court due to harm or irreconcilable disputes (L'houcine, 2013).

7.4.3. Financial Khula

Where the wife waives her financial rights in exchange for ending the marriage.

7.4.4.The difference between khul'a and divorce

*Khula

It is initiated by the wife, and she pays a financial compensation in exchange for ending the marriage.

*Divorce

It is initiated by the husband, and there is no requirement for the wife to pay financial compensation.

8. Real Numbers

Official statistics in many countries reveal an increasing rate of divorce cases, especially in recent years. In Arab countries, Algeria is witnessing a noticeable rise in divorce rates, where many marital relationships are ended through khula (divorce initiated by the wife). In 2003, Algeria recorded 560 cases of khula, which then increased to 813 cases in 2004, and to 3,226 cases in 2005, reaching 3,500 cases in 2006. Between 2008 and 2010, the cases of khula amounted to approximately 10,000 cases (Sanani, 2020).

In 2017, the cases of khula reached 68,000, accounting for 20% of the total divorce cases, according to statistics from the Supreme Islamic Council.In this context, Algerian Minister of Justice Abdel Rashid Tabi announced an increase in the number of divorce rulings witnessed in Algerian courts, with 6,000 divorce cases recorded across various provinces of the country, amidst changing social and economic conditions (Sanani, 2020).

Summary of numbers

•2003: 560 cases of khula.

•2004: 813 cases of khula.

•2005: 3226 cases of khula.

•2006: 3500 cases of khula.

•2008-2010: 10,000 cases of khula.

• 2017: 68,000 cases of khula (20% of total divorce cases).

These numbers reflect a significant increase in divorce cases in Algeria, indicating a change in the social perspective on marriage and divorce, and the impact of economic and social factors on family stability (Sanani, 2020). Statistics indicate a rise in the numbers of marital dissolution (divorce and khula) in Algeria: In 2021, Algeria recorded 44,000 cases of divorce, including more than 10,000 cases of khula. This increasing trend in separation rates among couples in recent years raises significant concern among social affairs specialists, as divorce has become a threatening element to the stability of society, especially with its negative impact on children and families. According to statistics from the Ministry of Justice, these figures only include officially registered divorce cases and do not account for unofficial separations that occur outside the legal framework, even though they remain present in reality.

9. Causes of the Increase in Khula Cases

Official statistics issued by relevant authorities in Algeria indicate a noticeable rise in the number of marital dissolution cases (divorce and Khula) in recent years. In 2021, 44,000 divorce cases were recorded, including over 10,000 cases of Khula. This increasing trend in spousal separation rates is a source of concern for researchers and specialists in social affairs, as divorce has become a threatening element to family and societal stability, especially given its negative impacts on children and family cohesion.

According to statistics from the Ministry of Justice, these figures reflect only officially registered divorce cases and do not include unofficial separations that occur outside the legal framework, although they still exist on the ground.Legal experts attribute the beginning of the rise in divorce phenomena to 2005, when the Algerian Family Code issued in 1984 was amended. The law shifted from the principle of the husband's prerogative in divorce (meaning

the husband alone could initiate divorce) to a new legal principle of "judicial divorce," which allows the wife to request a divorce or Khula (Sijal, 2022). In Algeria's legal framework, Article 54 of the Family Code outlines the process of Khula, whereby a wife, with her husband's consent, can initiate divorce by offering financial compensation, with a judge determining the amount if they disagree, based on the original dowry. Conversely, Article 53 grants the wife the right to seek a divorce (Talaq) under specific circumstances, including prolonged financial neglect (exceeding four months), harm inflicted upon her, or persistent marital discord.

9.1. Natural Causes

The phenomenon of Khula is a significant social issue that profoundly impacts the ethical and value systems of society. The increasing number of Khula cases is attributed to a variety of interconnected reasons, some related to human nature and marital relationships, and others linked to social, economic, and legal factors. Prominent among these causes are: (Sanani, 2020).These behaviors can intensify over time, leading to the breakdown of the marital relationship and prompting the wife to seek Khula.

9.2. Social Causes

Marital relationships are significantly influenced by the surrounding environment, with social dynamics playing a crucial role in either exacerbating or resolving conflicts. Prominent social factors contributing to Khula include: interference from family members, where the involvement of a parent or siblings in marital affairs can intensify disagreements; societal pressures, where unrealistic social expectations can destabilize a marriage; the spread of rumors, which can foster an atmosphere of distrust between spouses; and external intervention, where the involvement of friends or relatives in marital issues can escalate problems (Sanani, 2020).

9.3. Child-Related Causes

Children are described as the adornment of worldly life, as stated in the Holy Quran: "And He has made for you from your spouses children and grandchildren" (Surah An-Nahl: 72). However, this blessing can turn into a source of conflict in some families, where children become a means of disagreement between spouses, especially in cases of persistent disputes or incompatibility. One spouse may blame the other for issues related to raising the children, such as accusing the mother of neglect or the father of harsh treatment. In some instances, children are exploited as a tool for psychological pressure, where one parent incites the children against the other, exposing them to psychological and behavioral disorders (Sanani, 2020).

9.4. Causes Related to Second Marriage

Second marriage is considered one of the most significant factors leading to the escalation of marital disputes in Algerian society. A husband may marry another woman without the consent of his first wife, or even without informing her, resulting in a loss of trust between the spouses. In this situation, the first wife loses her sense of security and doubts her husband's suitability as a life partner, often leading her to seek Khula. Furthermore, the wife may fear the negative social repercussions of this decision, such as societal stigma or the impact on the children's future (Sanani, 2020).

9.5. Behavioral Causes

The emergence of unacceptable behaviors in a spouse after marriage, such as deviant conduct like addiction or violence, a sudden and negative shift in personality or behavior over time, or the failure to fulfill marital responsibilities including neglect of the family or partner, can lead to the deterioration of the marital relationship, often compelling the wife to seek Khula as a final recourse (Sanani, 2020).

9.6. Legal and Judicial Causes

Legal and judicial factors also contribute to the rise in Khula cases; the simplification of legal procedures following amendments to the Algerian Family Code has made it a more accessible option for women, while misunderstandings regarding marital rights and obligations can lead to its pursuit, and in situations where reconciliation is deemed unachievable, judicial authorities may ultimately issue a Khula ruling (Sanani, 2020). The Algerian judicial system faces criticism regarding its handling of Khula cases, where15 to 20 conciliation sessions are held between the spouses in some instances without reaching practical solutions. This approach is often considered ineffective, as judges may focus on reconciliation attempts without adequately considering the psychological and social circumstances of the couple. Furthermore, some judges may lack sufficient expertise in dealing with family law cases, leading to delays in issuing rulings and increased tension between the parties (Sanani, 2020). These reasons illustrate that Khula is not the result of a single factor but rather the product of a complex interplay between natural, social, and behavioral factors. Therefore, mitigating this phenomenonrequires strengthening dialogue between spouses, improving the surrounding social environment, andraising awareness among individuals about the importance of fulfilling marital responsibilities. Recent amendments to the Algerian Family Code have introduced a set of significant reforms aimed at achieving greater balance in the rights of family members, particularly concerning the termination of marital relationships. Key among these amendments is the abolition of arbitrary divorce, which previously allowed the husband to end the marriage without needing to provide compelling reasons, placing the wife in a vulnerable position. The procedures for Khula have also been regulated, enabling the wife to request the termination of the marriage in exchange for a financial payment, with a mechanism established to determine this amount in cases where the parties do not agree. Furthermore, the law has expanded the wife's rights to seek divorce, specifying ten grounds upon which a wife can base her divorce request, including non-provision of financial support, adultery, and persistent marital discord.

These amendments have significantly impacted the status of women in Algerian society, granting them greater rights in terminating marriages under specific circumstances, thereby contributing to the reduction of instances of injustice and abuse. However, the implementation of these laws still faces challenges within the judicial system, particularly given the high rates of divorce and Khula, necessitating further efforts to ensure the fair and effective application of the law. Overall, it can be argued that these amendments represent a positive step towards achieving greater balance in family rights in Algeria, with a particular focus on protecting women's rights.

9.7. The impact of social media

It emerges as a double-edged sword in marital life, where its excessive and unconscious use can lead to the disintegration of family bonds. This negative impact manifests in several ways, the first being a decline in effective communication between spouses, as couples replace genuine interactions with virtual communication, leading to an accumulation of misunderstandings and disagreements. Furthermore, excessive preoccupation with these platforms causes emotional absence, where one partner feels neglected and lonely. Additionally, interactions and posts on social media can arouse suspicion and jealousy between spouses, undermining trust. The risk of relinquishing privacy is also a factor, as couples may publicly share personal details or marital disputes, exposing the relationship to external interference. In conclusion, the analysis underscores that a lack of awareness regarding the optimal use of technology exacerbates marital problems (Yahi, 2022). Therefore, raising awareness about the importance of balance between the virtual and real worlds, fostering effective communication, and abandoning harmful behaviors on social media become essential for maintaining the stability of marital life.

10. Effects of Khula on Spouses: An In-depth Analysis

10. 1. Negative Psychological and Physical Consequences

Khula Divorce precipitates a range of adverse effects on the divorcing individuals, manifesting psychologically as the potential development of depression and chronic anxiety, a decline in self-esteem coupled with feelings of worthlessness, and a tendency towards social isolation driven by a fear of judgment; physically, these effects can include sleep disturbances and insomnia, the experience of unexplained physical pains, and the onset of stress-related dermatological conditions.

10.2. Identity Crisis and Social Role

The phenomenon of *Khula* divorce has sparked debates about gender equality and the role of Islamic law in modern Algerian society. While some view *Khula* as a progressive step toward women's rights, others argue that it reinforces patriarchal norms by requiring women to pay a financial price for their freedom. According to Mir-Hosseini (2000), the application of *Khula* in Muslim-majority societies often reflects broader tensions between religious traditions and modern notions of gender equality (Mir-Hosseini, 2000). In Algeria, the legal process for *Khula* can be lengthy and cumbersome, requiring court approval and proof of irreconcilable differences. This can discourage women from pursuing divorce, particularly in cases where they face pressure from family or community members to remain in the marriage. Additionally, the lack of awareness about legal rights among women, especially in rural areas, further limits the effectiveness of *Khula* as a tool for empowerment

10.2. Impact on Family Structures

The rise of *Khula* divorces in Algeria has contributed to changing family dynamics. While it allows women to escape harmful marriages, it also raises concerns about the stability of family structures. In a society where marriage is highly valued, the increasing use of *Khula* reflects broader shifts in attitudes toward marriage and divorce. According to Charrad (2001), the Algerian Family Code, despite its patriarchal underpinnings, has introduced provisions like *Khula* that acknowledge the need for women's agency in marital dissolution (Charrad, 2001). The husband's ability to overcome the divorce crisis varies depending on several factors: his personal history and existence of previous failures; his degree of psychological resilience and adaptability; the nature of his family experiences during childhood; and the surrounding social and cultural environment. The divorced husband loses two primary identities: the identity of "husband," which was a source of pride and self-esteem,

and the identity of "father," especially if his relationship with his children is affected. This loss creates an existential void that is difficult to fill easily.

The husband experiences profound psychological trauma upon the occurrence of Khula, especially if the decision is sudden and unexpected. This trauma leaves long-lasting effects on his mental state. While the wife may express her emotions openly, such as sadness or anger, many men resort to suppressing their feelings due to societal norms that associate emotional expression with a lack of masculinity (Blidi, 2022). However, the stigma associated with divorce, particularly when initiated by women, remains a significant challenge. Women who pursue *Khul'a* often face social ostracism and judgment, which can affect their mental health and social standing. This stigma is particularly pronounced in rural areas, where traditional values are more deeply entrenched (Bouatta, 2016).

10.3. Economic and Social Consequences

The economic impact of *Khula* on women can be profound, particularly for those who lack financial independence. By requiring women to return their dowry or forfeit financial rights, *Khula* can leave them economically vulnerable, especially if they are responsible for children. This economic vulnerability often forces women to rely on extended family or social support systems, which may not always be available.

On a societal level, the increasing prevalence of *Khula* divorces has led to a gradual shift in attitudes toward divorce. While stigma persists, there is growing recognition of the need to address issues such as domestic violence and marital discord. According to Bouatta (2016), the rise in *Khula* cases has prompted discussions about the need for legal reforms to better protect women's rights within marriage and divorce (Bouatta, 2016).

Conclusion

The social, cultural, and economic transformations that Algerian society is experiencing today, marital separation (Khula) remains an increasingly prevalent phenomenon with profound effects on the structure of the family and society as a whole. The family, as the fundamental building block of society, shapes the future of individuals and determines whether society moves toward stability or disintegration. When this foundation is shaken by divorce, the consequences extend beyond the couple to the children living in these broken homes. Khula is not merely a personal decision between spouses; it is a social phenomenon with multi-layered negative repercussions. From the psychological distress suffered by children to the deviant behaviors that may arise from the absence of parental guidance, and even the broader social impacts manifesting in family breakdown and declining societal values—these effects threaten

not only family stability but also the cohesion of society as a whole. Therefore, it is crucial for society to recognize the gravity of this issue and address it at its roots. This requires promoting a marital culture based on understanding and dialogue, providing psychological and legal support to families in crisis, and raising awareness about the negative effects of divorce on children and society. Additionally, there must be social policies that strengthen family stability and support families in facing the economic and social challenges that may lead to disintegration. Ultimately, building a healthy and stable society begins with building strong and cohesive families. The family is the first school where children learn values and principles, and it is the nurturing environment that shapes their personalities and futures. Thus, any societal reform must begin with caring for and protecting the family from disintegration to ensure a better future for coming generations.

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