

Divorce Issues among Spouses in Onitsha North Local Government Area of Anambra State

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Abstract

The study investigated issues relating to divorce among spouses in Onitsha North Local Government Area (LGA) of Anambra State. Specifically, the study identified causes of divorce in the area; determined perceived effects of divorce on children's development; and ways of curbing divorce. Three research questions were formulated to guide the study. Descriptive survey research design was used. Population was made up of male and female secondary school teachers in Onitsha North LGA. One hundred and forty (140) married male and female teachers were randomly sampled from the secondary schools in the area.. Questionnaire was used for data collection. Data were analyzed using mean. Findings of the study include: 18 causes of divorce in the area; including bareness/childlessness ($\bar{X}=3.56$), husband's physical abuse on the wife ($\bar{X}=3.90$); 19 perceived effects of divorce on development of children aged 11-15 years, including emotional and difficult to handle ($\bar{X}=3.23$), usually unhappy, sad and depressed ($\bar{X}=3.32$), among others. Other findings are 12 possible ways of curbing divorce in the area, including divorce should not be legalized so that couples will be discourage from ending their marriage ($\bar{X}=3.64$), couples should learn to resolve their differences by themselves ($\bar{X}=3.63$), and so on. Six recommendations were made, including, among others, that couples should get premarital training from churches and/or other religious organizations before proceeding with the marriage; there should be at least a one to two years period of courtship before marriage.

Key words: Spouses, Divorce, Causes, Children, Effects, Curbing.

Introduction

Marriage is very important in any society. This is because stable marriages produce stable families. The society has set up norms and procedures that can guide young people in making decisions which lead to stability in marriage. Marriage is the union of a

man and a woman who have agreed to come together to build a family. Anyanwu and Abiogu, (2012) defines marriage as the union of a man and a woman as husband and wife. Marriage is intended to be a stable and enduring relationship. Marriage marks the beginning of the family since marriage

and procreation are intertwined and inseparable. In fact, married people are accorded more respect and honour as they get to share their love with others, give birth to children, rear them and contribute meaningfully to the continuity of their various communities. The family, on the other hand is the child's first place of contact to the world. Ezedum (2012) perceived family as the building blocks of all known communities. It is the most important group to which people ever belong. According to Obodomu (2005), it is the unit that remains when all other forms of human organization collapse. The family is a set up which permits parents to provide the children with different types of stimulating interactions that equip them for their future responsibilities (Oshadumo, 2010). The child as a result acquires initial education and socialization from the parents and other significant persons in the family (Igbinsosa, 2014). According to Souzey and Anyakoha (2012), children are seen as great companies in the family as well as taking care of their aged parents. Structurally, Igbinsosa (2014) affirms that the family (home) is either broken or intact. A broken home according to Igbinsosa is one that is not structurally intact, as a result of divorce, separation, death of one parent and illegitimacy. To be precise, Mole and Dim (2012) affirm that families where children are well spaced and trained by both parents would boast of brighter future and higher socio-economic placement for the children.

Most broken marriages end in divorce. Hence, Iwuagwu and Ogbuji (2015) noted that intimate partner

violence which occurs as a result of misunderstanding can lead to divorce. Divorce according to Bubelwa (2014) is a legal process through which a marriage is dissolved. Traditionally, divorce implied that one of the parents is guilty of some transgressions in the marriage and that one was at fault. Historically, adultery and physical cruelty were the only basis for divorce, but later a number of other transgressions were added such as abandonment, habitual drunkenness and mental cruelty. Divorce is considered as unmitigated evil. Broken homes occur when husband and wife separate from each other through either natural causes (death) or by human cause (divorce), leaving the care and responsibility of the children to one parent. According to Keswet and Dapas (2010), single parenthood could result from the death of a spouse. Death is natural cause of why homes tear apart. It is unpredicted phenomenon that has gone beyond anybody's control. It can occur as a result of war, illness, accident and through natural disasters such as flooding, earth quake and plane crash or bomb blast. Unfortunately, Nwachukwu (1998) laments the number of children born into broken homes is on the increase by the day especially in Nigeria. According to Bubelwa (2014), children from broken homes are nearly five times more likely to suffer damaging mental troubles than those who live with both parents. This shows that two parents are much better in bringing up healthy children than one. This equally implies that children from broken homes will most likely have difficult time in life. The effects of

broken homes on children are traumatic. Broken homes make children to question their self-worth, to experience unnecessary grief, guilt or confusion. Young children especially, have difficulty understanding the rationalities of their parent's decision to divorce. In a broken marriage, it is difficult for children to find a sense of security because experience shows them that what seemed stable and good fell to pieces and left them empty (Bubelwa, 2014).

Ezeobele and Anyakoha (2010) contend that relationship is a very important part of family life. Parental relationship plays a very important role in determining the academic performance of their children in school. Family harmony can easily be affected due to parental conflicts. In fact, Igbinosa (2014) establishes that any laxity on the part of the parents in assisting and guiding the adolescents may result in academic backwardness and development of unwholesome behaviours. The foundation of what a person becomes in the society is laid in the home and at the initial stage of life. Parents therefore have important roles to play in ensuring that their children acquire the appropriate social, psychological, moral and academic development. They are required to be alive to their responsibility in guiding their children academically and in providing sex and moral education for their children at home.

Unfortunately, the family which is the most important social unit that provides social and economic security to its members such as children is under threat due to rising cases of divorce and

separation (Kasoma, 2012). For this reason, schools are likely to have more pupils whose parents have been divorced or separated than ever before. According to Nwachukwu (1998), children from broken homes are more hostile, aggressive, anxious, fearful, hyperactive and distractive than children from families that are intact. Most often, such children lack proper guidance and thus take part in obnoxious and anti-academic activities that would leave the ear tingled and nerves frayed.

In Onitsha, most homes are not intact as a result of issues of incompatibility of the couples, death of parents and the quest for oversea trips to make money. Some men, who travel abroad, abandon their homes and would not communicate with them for so long thereby leaving such children in dilemmas and the whole family in shambles. Currently, the public outcries of teachers in Onitsha North is on the increase as the secondary schools within the area of study record more negative attitudes of the students towards their school work, drop-out, stealing, fighting, wilful damage of the school properties, poor nutrition and dietary conditions and other emotional problems and disturbances (Ileagu, 2019). When interviewed by Ileagu (2019), ninety five percent (95%) of the teachers traced the origin of the aforementioned problems to the students' homes, with eighty percent (80%) of the teachers stating categorically that most of the ill-mannered students in their various secondary schools within the area of study came from divorced homes. It

therefore becomes pertinent that a research of this nature be conducted in order to find out the causes of divorce, its implication on the development of the students and to proffer solutions to the problem. Therefore, the present study examines the issues on divorce among spouse in Onitsha North L. G. A. of Anambra State.

Purpose of the study

The major purpose of this study was to investigate divorce issues among spouses in Onitsha North L.G. A. of Anambra State. Specifically, the study:

1. identified causes of divorce among spouses in Onitsha North Local Government Area.
2. determined the perceived effects of divorce on development of children aged 11 to 15 years.
3. determined the ways of curbing divorce among spouses in Onitsha North Local Government Area.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the causes of divorce among spouses in Onitsha North L.G.A?
2. What are the perceived effects of divorce on development of children aged 11 to 15 years?
3. What are the ways of curbing divorce in Onitsha North Local Government Area?

Methodology

Area of the study: The study was carried out in Onitsha North LGA of Anambra State. The LGA is a very heavily populated commercial centre. There are civil servants in the area, but

most of the inhabitants are business men and women. There are 28 secondary schools in Onitsha North L.G.A (Source: Field work, April 2019). The area of the study was chosen due to the high rate of divorce among the married couples in Onitsha North which affect all round development of children in Junior Secondary Schools.

Population of the study: The target population of the study comprised of all the married secondary school male and female teachers from Onitsha North L.G.A of Anambra State. The accessible population consists of married teachers in public secondary schools in the area of the study. There are 289 married female teachers and 123 married male teachers in public secondary schools in Onitsha North L.G.A (Source: Education Office, Onitsha North L.G.A Headquarters, April, 2019). The population of the study had varied educational qualifications ranging from Nigeria Certificate of Education (NCE) to B.Ed and M.Ed. Their academic exposure and marital status made them more suitable in answering the research questions. They were 25 years of age and above.

Sample for the study: Ten public secondary schools were purposively selected. The sample size for this study consisted of 140 married male and female teachers sampled with the use of stratified sampling technique from the schools. Fourteen (14) married teachers comprising four (4) males and ten (10) females were randomly sampled from each school. In total, 40 male teachers and 100 female teachers were sampled.

Instrument for data collection: Questionnaire was used for data collection. It had two sections namely

Section, A and B. Section A contained items eliciting the bio-data of the participants. Section B contained the questionnaire items arranged on a four point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). It was validated by three Home Economics lecturers.

Reliability of the instrument was determined through test-retest. Data obtained were correlated using Pearson Moment Correlation technique. Coefficient index of 0.80 was obtained.

Data Collection Method: A total of 145 copies of the questionnaire were distributed by the researcher and one research assistant. Only 142 copies were

properly filled and retrieved. This represents 97.93 percent return.

Data Analysis Techniques: Data were analysed using mean. A mean score of 2.50 was used as the criterion mean for decision making for each questionnaire item. Thus, any item with a mean score of 2.50 and above was regarded as "agree" while any item with a mean score below 2.50 was not agreed as an item.

Results

Causes of Divorce among Spouses in Onitsha North LGA.

Table 1: Mean Responses on Causes of Divorce among Spouses in Onitsha North LGA of Anambra State

S/ N	Causes of Divorce	N = 140			Remarks
		\bar{X}_g	\bar{X}_f	X_g	
1	Abandonment by any of the couples	2.20	1.88	1.97	Disagreed
2	Bareness/ Childlessness	3.25	3.69	3.56	Agreed
3	Husband's physical abuse on the wife	3.75	3.97	3.90	Agreed
4	Financial problems/Poverty	3.75	3.60	3.64	Agreed
5	Interferences from parents or in-laws	3.90	3.83	3.85	Agreed
6	Lack of maturity	3.88	3.94	3.92	Agreed
7	Sexual incompatibility/Lack of intimacy	3.88	3.94	3.92	Agreed
8	Cultural and lifestyle differences	2.0	2.0	2.0	Disagreed
9	Religious beliefs and differences	2.5	1.86	2.04	Disagreed
10	Sex of children/ Absence male children	3.25	3.66	3.56	Agreed
11	Unemployment	3.83	3.91	3.90	Agreed
12	Loss of job	3.08	3.35	3.27	Agreed
13	Unfaithfulness/ Infidelity or extramarital affairs	2.96	3.34	3.23	Agreed
14	Less education by any of the couples	1.90	1.77	1.80	Disagreed
15	Lack of commitment to their marital responsibilities	3.50	3.91	3.79	Agreed
16	Too much conflict or arguing	3.86	3.90	3.89	Agreed
17	Early marriage	2.93	3.41	3.27	Agreed
18	Substance abuse/addictions	2.10	1.86	1.86	Disagreed
19	Domestic violence	3.56	3.65	3.63	Agreed
20	Lack of support from couples' families	1.90	1.77	1.80	Disagreed

21	Little or no pre-marital education	3.43	3.44	3.93	Agreed
22	Lack of communication between spouse	3.43	3.44	3.93	Agreed
23	Physical appearance of spouse	2.20	1.88	1.97	Disagreed
24	Getting married for wrong reasons/ Wrong marital decisions	3.75	3.97	3.90	Agreed
25	Weight gain by a spouse	2.50	1.86	2.04	Disagreed
26	Unrealistic expectations	3.88	3.94	3.92	Agreed
27	Pre-marital cohabitation by any of spouse before marriage	1.90	1.77	1.80	Disagreed
28	Pre-marital childbearing and pregnancy	2.0	1.93	1.95	Disagreed
29	Divorce on the side of the couple's Parents	1.63	1.80	1.75	Disagreed

\bar{X}_m = Mean Responses of male teachers; \bar{X}_f = Mean Responses of female teachers; \bar{X}_g = Grand Means

Table 1 shows that alcohol addiction, physical abuse, financial problems, interferences from parents in-laws, lack of maturity and sexual incompatibility, absence of male children, unemployment, loss of job, unfaithfulness/infidelity or extramarital affairs, lack of commitment, too much conflict or arguing, early marriage, domestic violence, little or no pre-

marital education, lack of communication, getting married for wrong reasons and unrealistic expectations are the causes of divorce in Onitsha North LGA. of Anambra State. Each of these items has a mean of ≥ 2.50 .

Teachers' Perceived Effects of Divorce on the Development of Children Aged 11 To 15 Years

Table 2: Mean Responses of Male and Female Teachers on their Perceived Effects of Divorce on Children

		N=140			
S/N	Perceived effects of divorce on children	\bar{X}_m	\bar{X}_f	\bar{X}_g	Remarks
1	have problems in concentrating or paying attention in class	3.0	3.38	3.27	Agreed
2	are emotional and difficult to handle	3.28	3.22	3.23	Agreed
3	are not helped with school work	3.83	3.86	3.79	Agreed
4	become truant at school	3.89	3.90	3.89	Agreed
5	Have academic below average performance always.	3.33	3.76	3.63	Agreed
6	are usually unhappy, sad or depressed	3.13	3.27	3.32	Agreed
7	are usually uncooperative and disobedient in class	3.40	3.45	3.93	Agreed
8	usually don't complete their education or drops out of school	3.83	3.60	3.80	Agreed
9	look unhealthy and are hunger stricken (especially those not in boarding schools)	3.60	3.20	3.45	Agreed
10	lose family traditions, celebrations and daily routines	3.25	3.69	3.56	Agreed
11	lose their friends, school environment and other support systems	3.28	3.22	3.23	Agreed

12	get increased verbal aggression and violence from other children	3.0	3.33	3.23	Agreed
13	are anxiety and depressed seem to worsen after divorce	3.0	3.23	3.27	Agreed
14	increased approval of pre-marital sex, cohabitation and divorce	3.75	3.60	3.64	Agreed
15	have earlier sexual debut	2.0	2.0	2.0	Disagreed
16	increased rate of sexually transmitted infections	2.50	1.86	2.04	Disagreed
17	experience less trust and satisfaction in romantic relationships	1.40	1.24	1.28	Disagreed
18	are less likely to view marriage as permanent and lifelong commitment	2.10	1.86	1.86	Disagreed
19	are less likely to cohabit and do so at younger ages	1.53	2.15	1.97	Disagreed
20	are more likely to abandon their faith	3.28	3.22	3.23	Agreed
21	have less language stimulation	2.10	1.86	1.86	Disagreed
22	experience increased abuse and neglect of children	3.83	3.86	3.79	Agreed
23	experience increased psychiatric disorder	2.10	1.86	1.86	Disagreed
24	are likely to commit or attempt suicide	2.50	1.86	2.04	Disagreed
25	are likely to developing addiction such as alcohol, drug, and substance abuse	3.50	3.91	3.79	Agreed
26	dress indecently	2.0	2.0	2.0	Disagreed
27	are prone to stealing/armed robbery	3.83	3.60	3.80	Agreed
28	indulge in heinous crimes such as cyber crimes and kidnapping	3.25	3.69	3.56	Agreed

\bar{X}_m = Mean Responses of male teachers; \bar{X}_f = Mean Responses of female teachers; \bar{X}_g = Grand Means

Table 2 shows that 19 out of the 28 items have mean (\bar{x}) responses ≥ 2.50 . This implies that the respondents agree that 19 items are their perceived effects of divorce on children aged 11 to 15 years.

Ways of Curbing Divorce in Onitsha North LGA.

Table 3: Mean Responses of Male and Female Teachers on the Ways of Curbing Divorce

S/N	Ways of curbing divorce	\bar{X}_m	\bar{X}_f	\bar{X}_g	Remarks
1	Couples should learn to establish mutual commitment to live together forever.	3.83	3.60	3.80	Agreed
2	Couples should get premarital training from churches and/or other religious organizations before proceeding with the marriage	3.60	3.20	3.45	Agreed
3	There should be at least a one to two years period of courtship before marriage.	3.25	3.69	3.56	Agreed
4	Divorce should not be legalized so that couples will be discouraged from ending their marriages	3.75	3.60	3.64	Agreed
5	Religious organizations and marriage counsellors should educate couples on benefits of making sacrifices in marriages	3.50	3.91	3.79	Agreed

6	Children should learn to pray for their parents.	3.86	3.90	3.89	Agreed
7	Wives should learn to submit to their husbands.	3.56	3.65	3.63	Agreed
8	Husbands should learn to treat their wives with respect.	3.13	3.27	3.32	Agreed
9	People wanting to get married should look for partners that share the same beliefs and values with them	3.86	3.90	3.89	Agreed
10	Couples should learn to resolve their differences by themselves.	3.56	3.65	3.63	Agreed
11	Parents-in-laws should not interfere with their children's marriages.	3.13	3.27	3.32	Agreed
12	If there are cases that need the attention of friends, friends should be neutral and not taking sides.	3.83	3.86	3.79	Agreed

\bar{X}_m = Mean Responses of male teachers; \bar{X}_f = Mean Responses of female teachers; \bar{X}_g = Grand Means

Table 3 shows that divorce can be curbed with the joint efforts of the couple, their parents, children, churches, religious organizations, marriage counsellors, friends and the entire society. The Table also shows that each of the 12 items obtained a mean response of ≥ 2.50 . This implies that each item is a possible way of curbing divorce in the LGA.

Discussion

Research question No1 sought to find out the causes of divorce among spouses in Onitsha North Local Government Area of Anambra State. Findings revealed that bareness, physical abuse, financial problems, interferences from parents or in-laws, lack of maturity and sexual incompatibility are the causes of divorce in Onitsha North Local Government Area. The above findings agreed with the observations made by Kasoma (2012). Furthermore Sondashi (1977) says that marriage is not for weaklings. This seems to be true considering the hardship and problems encountered by married couples. Findings also revealed that absence of male children, loss of

job, unfaithfulness/infidelity, domestic violence, lack of communication and getting married for wrong reasons are other causes of divorce in Onitsha North L.G.A. The above findings are in harmony with the submissions made by Fagan and Zill (2011) who uphold that unemployment and unrealistic expectations can lead to an untimely end of marriage. They further insist that people who get married for wrong reasons are likely to separate early, especially when the reasons are not forthcoming. For instance, Raley and Megan (2020) discovered that materialistic women who get married to rich men because of their wealth are likely to ask for annulment if eventually the wealth vanishes.

Research question No2 sought to examine the perceived effects of divorce on the development of the Junior Secondary School Students aged 11 to 15 years in Onitsha North L.G.A. Findings revealed that pupils whose parents have divorced or separated have problems in concentrating with their studies which negatively affects the educational performance of the students since such children are not

helped with school work and sometimes drop out from school. The above view has been previously promulgated by Nwamadi (2018) who upheld that pupils whose parents are divorced or separated are usually unhappy, sad or depressed. To be precise, Bubelwa (2014) affirms that psychological problems which emanate as a result of broken homes invariably lead to poor academic achievement of children in schools. Furthermore, it was discovered that divorce makes children to loose their family traditions, celebrations and daily routines. At the event of divorce, Cohen (2019) discovers that the life of the children is interrupted. They may have to move in with one of their parents who may decide to drop some traditions and introduce new routines. Getting used to the new routines may become a challenging task to the children who see it as changes they must get used to whether they like it or not. For instance, Pett, Lang and Gander (1992) stated that the change in residence may lead to loss of friends, school environment and other support systems. Findings also revealed that divorce leads to increased verbal aggression and violence, increased approval (by children of divorced parents) of premarital sex, earlier sexual debut and increased abuse and neglect of children. The above findings are in agreement with the submissions made by Jeynes (2001), Jonsson *et al* (2000) and Ellis *et al* (2003). They stated that parents' divorce leads children into having sexual relationships earlier in life, since it is capable of changing the child's outlook on sexual behaviour. In line with the

findings made in this study, Rostosky, Regnerus and Wright (2003) argue thus: "since religious practice has benefits in areas such as sexual restraint, the child of divorced parents may lose this protection". In fact, Myers (1996) clearly stated that children of divorced parents may lose their religious faith and practice. Emotionally, findings revealed that children of divorced parents may be devastated, experience increased verbal aggression and violence on other children. Anxiety and depression seem to worsen after divorce. No wonder, Kelleher *et al* (2000) & Rings-back-Weitofte *et al* (2003) conclude that children of single parents are twice as likely to have emotional and behavioral problems. On the other hand, such children are not free from abuse from other children, neighbors and care givers. Hence, CDC reported an adverse family experiences among children in non parental care. They found out thus: "children living with one biological parent were between 3 and 8 times as likely as children living with two biological parents to have experienced neighborhood violence, caregiver violence or to have lived with a caregiver with mental illness or alcohol or drug problem" (Bramlett and Radcliff, 2014).

Research question No3 sought to recommend the ways of curbing divorce among spouses in Onitsha North L.G.A. Findings revealed that such feat can only be achieved with joint efforts of the Curriculum planners, Ministry of Education, Guidance and Counsellors, Government, School managers and the entire community. The above findings have been previously promulgated by

Lin, Brown, Wright and Hammersmith (2018). Furthermore, Kasoma (2012) suggested that school managers should make every effort to strengthen the relationship between the home and school. Furthermore, the findings are in agreement with the submissions made by Jeynes (2001), Jonsson *et al* (2000) and Ellis *et al* (2003) who insist that the entire society should be involved in waging war against divorce. Hence, they stated that the entire community should be sensitized on the effect of divorce on school going children.

Conclusion

The following conclusions were drawn based on the findings of the study: Significantly, the study revealed that bareness/abandonment, physical abuse, financial problems/poverty, interferences from parents and in-laws, lack of maturity, sexual incompatibility/lack of intimacy, sex of children/absence of male children, unemployment, loss of job, unfaithfulness/infidelity or extramarital affairs, lack of commitment, too much conflict or arguing, early marriage, domestic violence, little or no pre-marital education, lack of communication, getting married for wrong reasons and unrealistic expectations are the causes of divorce in Onitsha North Local Government Area of Anambra State. It was further discovered that children from broken homes are not helped with school work, are unhappy, sad or depressed and generally perform poorly academically. Findings also revealed that such children suffer emotional problems such as increased verbal aggression and

violence and may abandon their religious faith entirely. Such children may grow wild due to inadequate parental advice and guidance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Husbands and wives should learn to establish mutual commitment to be together and not to stay in a relationship because of constraints such as signing a rent agreement or purchasing furniture together.
2. Couples should get premarital training from churches and/or other religious organizations before proceeding with the marriage. In fact, there should be at least a 1 to 2 years period of courtship so that the intending husbands and wives will get to understand themselves before deciding on whether to marry or not.
3. Religious organizations and marriage counsellors should educate the couples on the benefits of making sacrifices in their marriage.
4. Wives should learn to submit to their husbands and not to argue with them all the time.

On the other hand, husbands should learn to treat their wives with respect so that peace will reign.

5. People wanting to get married should look for partners that share the same beliefs and values with them. Couples should also learn to resolve their differences within themselves and not to invite third parties as the invitation of such may worsen the situation.

6. Parents and in-laws should not interfere with their children's marriages especially when they are not invited. If there are cases that need the attention of friends, friends should be neutral and not taking sides with a view to uniting the couple and making the union stronger.

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