

**ANALYTICAL STUDY OF CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF
DIVORCE AS PERCEIVED BY STUDENTS IN SOUTH SOUTH
GEOPOLITICAL ZONE OF NIGERIA**

Ugo C. OKOLIE

Independent researcher, Department of Political Science,
Faculty of the Social Sciences, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria
E-mail: ugookolie3@gmail.com

Okwu A. ONYEMA

Senior Lecturer,
Department of Sociology,
Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria
E-mail: Luk4tinasly@gmail.com

Ugo S. BASEY

Senior Lecturer,
Department of Sociology,
Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria
E-mail: ugoluoisa@gmail.com

Abstract

Divorce or the dissolution of marriage has been subject of discourse among social scientists from a wide range of disciplines in recent years. Unfortunately, insufficient number of studies in this area has been conducted in South South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. This study of the possible causes and effects of divorce was undertaken to fill this research gap. A descriptive method was adopted and data was collected via a survey of six hundred (600) respondents. Data collected were analyzed using percentage, mean and t-test. The findings revealed that the major causes of divorce as perceived by students are infertility, infidelity, primary wrong selection of spouse, fiery temper(anger), interference of spouse's family, immaturity, communication defects, unmet emotional needs (feeling less), loss of sexual desire, cultural differences, poverty and domestic violence. While the major strategies for effective control of divorce were pre and post marital counseling that is affordable, putting spouse before children, effective legislation against forced / early marriage, effective marriage social networking, regular renewal of marital vows and defining position of in-laws early in marriage. The study also indicated that there was no significant difference between the opinion of

male and female students on the causes of divorce in South South geographical zone of Nigeria. Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that government and non-governmental organizations together should intensify efforts to ensure that all unhappily married spouses have access to pre and post marital counseling that is affordable across the length and breadth of the country.

Key words: *Divorce, causes, effects, marriage, counseling.*

Introduction

Divorce or marital separation or the dissolution of marriage is the “final termination of marital union, cancelling the legal duties and responsibilities of marriage and the dissolving of the bond of matrimony between the parties” (Mattoo & Ashai, 2012:113). Divorce is a remarkable development which has attracted global attention. Mekonnen, Kassa and Ayalew (2019) assert that divorce has severe effect on the family and the society. The psychological effect on “the initiator includes fear, distance, impatience, doubt resentment, guilt, blaming and fault finding. While the psychological impact on the receiver include shock, disloyalty, loss of control, ill-treatment, decreased self-esteem, anger, insecurity, a desire to get revenge and wishes to settle down” (Al-Ubaidu, 2017:3). Because of its psychological and social effects on the family and the society at large, government and non-governmental organizations have played vital roles in the elimination of marital separation.

Divorce is “usually perceived as the solution to difficult marital relationships irrespective of the repercussion on the couple, children, adolescents and society at large. Divorce is one of the most stressful life events a person can experience regardless of whether one sought the divorce or was unprepared for the divorce”(Ahiaoma 2013:163). Divorce results in crisis for family members. For adults, divorce signifies the loss of an intimate relationship that also brought security and support. It also signifies a loss of hope and dreams as well as feelings of failure (Olaniyi, 2015:19). The rate of divorce in recent times has increased significantly and it has been the subject of discourse among social scientists from a wide range of disciplines in the last two decades. Unfortunately, insufficient number of studies in this area has been conducted in the South South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. This study was undertaken to fill this research gap by analyzing the causes and effects of divorce as perceived by students in Nigeria.

Review of Related Literature

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2010:428), divorce is "the legal ending of marriage. While divorcee is a person whose marriage has been legally ended especially a woman". Thus, any reflection on divorce originates from the concept of marriage (Mekonnen, *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, we cannot engage in any far-reaching and grounded discussion of divorce without first explaining the concept of marriage.

The Concept of Marriage

Marriage is "a legal relationship between a husband and wife" (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2010:910). Today, marriage is regularly viewed as social convention that can be entered into and severed by the marital partners at will. As long as a given marriage relationship meets the needs of both individuals involved and is considered advantageous by both sides, the marriage is worth sustaining. Marriage is a covenant and a 'sacred bond' between a man and woman instituted by and publicly entered into before God and normally consummated by sexual intercourse. Genesis 1:27-28: "so God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth". In Genesis 2:22-24: And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made him a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife (hold fast to his wife), and they shall become one flesh". And Mark 10:9: "Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate". Marriage therefore, is a unique relationship different from all others. An essential characteristic of marriage is the biological fact that a man and woman can join together as male and female in a union that is oriented to the generation of new life. The union of marriage provides for the continuation of the human race and the development of human society.

Marriage is therefore a personal association between a man and a woman and a biological relationship for mating and reproduction. As a social, legal and religious institution, marriage has undergone many modifications and changes; nevertheless, its basic realities remain the same. The permanent, indissoluble, sacramental union of the orthodox differs strikingly from the free, easily served, and often not even officially registered marriages, let us say, of a modern Russian, and yet both of these marriages have certain underlying elements in common. In both instances, the couple seeks to make their union stable. They assume the

freedom and privilege of a sexual relationship, and normally have as their ultimate aim the establishment of a family. Biologically, the “objective of marriage is not only to legalize a sexual union, but rather to ensure the survival of the species and of the race” (Stone, 1939 cited in Wimalasena 2016:166). From this point of view, marriage is not merely a sexual relationship, but a parental association. It is the union of a male and a female for production and care of offspring and reproduction is, therefore, another fundamental objective or purpose of marriage.

The major function of marriage is to provide a forum for the affection and emotional security from one generation to another. In the marriage union, man and woman develop the full sense of togetherness, belonging, responsibility and interdependence (Olayinka, 1987). In addition, Makinde (2004) holds that the function of marriage is to provide happiness, security, cultural growth and development of a sense of responsibility for enhancing continuity and societal perpetuation. Marriage is seen as “a permanent union of a man and woman done freely, founded on love and designed for companionship, procreation and proper upbringing of the children. It can only be lawfully dissolved by death (Ahiaoma, 2013:163). Besides death, marriage can also be dissolved by reasons of sexual immorality on the part of one’s spouse, domestic abuse, chronic hardness of heart and abandonment.

As the Holy Bible realistically acknowledges that those who marry are likely to have pains and grief (1 Corinthians 7:28), no couple or marriage is immune to such inherent problems. What starts out as a relationship of great joy and promise can become the most frustrating and painful endeavor in a person’s life time. Eventually, all couples experience a significant crisis that can threaten their emotional safety and at times even the future of their marriage (Amadi & Amadi, 2014). In the view of Scobie (2009), the union between man and woman is a reflection of the image of God in us and can only be sustained through lifelong devotion. That is to say that any libertine behavior is against the covenant itself.

However, marriage can be legally dissolved through divorce. Divorce laws vary considerably around the world, but in most countries, it requires the sanction of a court or other authority in a legal process. The legal process of divorce may also involve issues of alimony (spousal support), child or children custody and support, distribution of property and division of debt (Mattoo & Ashai, 2012). As Askalemariam and Minwagaw, 2013 cited in Mekonnenet *al.* (2019) acknowledged, that there is high rate of divorce in Dejen and Aneded Woredas resulting from lack of conflict management skills, interference from parents of spouses and communication problems. Likewise, the possible consequences of divorce are anti-social behavior, school dropout, escalation of social vices and

crimes such as drug abuse, prostitution, kidnapping and other forms of violent crimes, poor mental, emotional and physical health of couples and their children, the physical threat to the life of couples. Divorce also exposed children to social, economic and psychological issues. According to Ahioma (2013:165), the devastating consequences of divorce include “changes in the life style and tradition of the family, changes in the economic and financial status of the family, and the children’s psychology, social and education development is affected adversely and the couple faces so many challenges varying from insecurity, depression, emotional and psychological trauma among others”.

The increases in marital separation “have been among the most visible features of the recent decades of family change. Some have viewed this as a sign of social and moral disruption with a potential to shatter the family institution and the foundations of society itself. Others have celebrated these trends as signaling increased individual liberty and the loosening of suffocating social mores. Divorce is one of the most often mentioned major life events and can cause major stress and upheaval for many, and a sense of relief and opportunity for personal growth for others” (Harkonen, 2013:3). Despite the conflicts surrounding divorce, many seemingly functional marriages break up (Amato, 2010) and on the other hand, not all troubled marriages end in divorce. This underlines the heterogeneity of divorces and the importance of factors that act as barriers to divorce or the possible options beyond it, and of the need for looking beyond marital quality and satisfaction as determinants. Divorce, in other words, is a multifaceted event (Gahler, 1998).Kurdek (1991) affirms that divorce mostly occur within the first four years of marriage.

Because of the importance of marriage, legal rules have always been put in place in every society to protect the legal union between spouses and the spouses themselves. The principal enactment in this respect in Nigeria is the marriage Act and the Matrimonial Causes Act, 1970. The Matrimonial Causes Act (MCA) guarantees some safeguards in the manner of judicial separation, restitution of conjugal rights, maintenance, and custody and as a last resort dissolution of marriage and settlement of properties. Though through the law, spouses can avail themselves of several types of relief in Nigeria, a number of these have proven inadequate overtime. The law on matrimonial causes in Nigeria has remained without appreciable improvement since the promulgation of the Matrimonial Causes Degree in 1970. In Nigeria, the law relating to alimony and settlement of matrimonial properties upon divorce, for instance, does not match reality and expectations of the society.

The Causes of Divorce

A number of studies have been conducted to identify and analyze the main causes of divorce across the world. Their findings identified the erosion of satisfaction in marriage, poor communication and problem-solving behavior, declines in marital quality, childlessness, physical abuse, maltreatment, exerting too much control over personal activities, a large difference in age, homesickness, alcohol addiction, sexual incompatibility, financial problem and lack of maturity, falling out of love, infidelity, religious and cultural differences, unrealistic expectation, social networking (Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp) lack of mutual respect between couples, extreme sexual orientation (homosexuality, lesbianism, bestiality, sodomy, oral sex, excessive sexual appetite), social incompatibility, dishonesty and moral decadence, unwholesome social behavior (Dickering, unnecessary criticism, gossip, nagging), the influence of westernization, self-pride, lack of perseverance, poverty, unemployment, negative impacts of movies, lack of understanding, over-confidence, education and urbanization, imbalance of economic survival, lack of submission on the part of the woman, children responsibility issues, domestic violence, stalking, negative sense of life, accumulation of every day stress, unmet emotional needs, dependence to his/her family, primary wrong selection of spouse, interference of spouse family, fiery temper (anger), suspicious, loveless marriage, psychological problems (Buckwell, 2010; Ahiaoma, 2013; Amadi&Amadi, 2014; Olaniyi, 2015; Sulaiman, Yunus& Hassan, 2015; Al- Ubaidi, 2017; Mekonnen *et al.*, 2019). Other reasons for the high incidence of marital breakup and failure have attached to people marrying for the wrong reasons. For instance, for the wedding benefit or the excessive pressure placed on young women to marry, mainly because their peers are been married (Yusuf & Mashi, 2014).

Marital life, which is characterized by family understanding and homogeneity, contributes positively to strengthening the psychological well-being of couples and family members. Despite the role of the family in maintaining the balance of society and its ability to ensure calmness and stability, it may contribute to disintegration and social separation in some cases due to divorce, which greatly affects individual families and the whole society particularly as external influence on the family is on the increase. In the world today, the marriage relationship never dies a natural death; it is murdered by ego, disrespect, selfishness and disloyalty.

Effects of Divorce or Marital Breakdown

Some of the effects associated with marital separation include emotional and psychological issues on the family members. For instance, the effects of divorced on the marriage couples and their children especially the adolescents.

Effects of Divorce on Marriage Couples

Whether a couple divorces or not is related to the life course stages and prior experiences of the partners. Young couples, for instance, have been consistently shown to have higher divorce rates, possibly due to their lower psychological and socio-economic maturity, potentially unreasonable expectations and a shorter search partner that led to an unstable match or the better outside options (alternative partners) (Lyngstad & Jalovaara, 2010). One of the main concerns of the increase in divorce has been its effects on the well-being of divorcees and their children. Most studies conclude that divorcees and their children fare worse according to several indicators of psychological, physical and socio-economic well-being compared to those who did not experience divorce (Amato 2000; Garriga & Harkonen, 2009; Amato, 2010; Harkonen, 2013). Findings of these effects range from heightened occurrence of psychological distress, anxiety, many physical health conditions due to chronic strain, poor performance in all aspects of life's endeavors, generally less happiness and increase in life dissatisfaction, economic recessions to cultural shifts and legal changes. Despite the sadness and feelings of loss associated with marital separation, it can also be a relief to at least one of the partners, often the one who has most wanted to separate (Wang & Amato, 2004).

Effects of Divorce on Children

Sociologists and psychologists are concerned with the effects of divorce on children. Children of divorced couples generally fare worse in terms of emotional, psychological and educational outcomes, they feel anger, fear, depression, loneliness, and even guilt. Some teens feel as though they must take on new responsibilities such as chores and taking care of siblings. Teens may also doubt his or her ability to get married or stay in marriage (Mattoo & Ashai, 2012). A major drop in economic well-being, frequent residential moves, changes in the social environment and other instability generating factors have the potential to undermine children's outcomes (Amato, 2010). Thus, divorce affects the economic, social and psychological well-being of the children and the relationships with their parents, teachers or friends, this disturbance may translate into lower levels of socio-economic attainment and physical and psychological well-being in adulthood (Harkonen, 2013). Relationship between divorced parents and their children continues to be characterized by low levels of contact, affection and intergenerational exchange well after the children became adults (Amato, 1994). The clinical manifestation of marital separation in children depends on many factors including the child's age, family, psycho-social functioning, the divorced parents' ability in the midst of their own anger, loss and discomfort to focus on their children's feelings and needs (Booth & Amato, 2004).

Theoretical Framework

While there are several theories which might prove appropriate for a discourse of this nature, the theory of social exchange presents us with a heuristic tool for interrogating the central issue of the study. Based upon the work of Blau (1964), the theory of social exchange is based on exchanges between parties within a social and human context where the behavior of individuals is based on the motivation of self-interest. Therefore, individuals who have a number of alternatives search for things and relationships that benefit them, searching for maximum benefit and the minimum cost in their interaction with others. Social exchange is organized through individuals' expectations, acceptance and justice standards. Thus, we expect other individuals to meet our needs if we try to meet their needs based on what is right and fair for each of us. All social acts are based on social exchange or mutual benefit. Marriage is a system based on benefit, and couples look at each other in terms of good qualities and bad traits that they see in each other. That is, the more prominent the good qualities are in one of the spouses, the more positive and attractive aspects associated with the material and moral aspects are. In contrast, when these aspects are not present, partners would not benefit from the status quo and hence the tendency to end the relationship and divorce. That is, the benefits related to family communication, wife/husband's behavior and personality, intimacy as well as family economics are all indicators of the adequacy of benefits for one or both spouses, affecting the continuity or termination of the relationship by one or both spouse (Al-Gharaibeh, 2018).

The social exchange theory of interpersonal relationships (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978) specifies how comparisons of costs and benefits of staying in relationship are continually made. It states that relationships are likely to dissolve when costs exceed benefits. Commodities being exchanged include sex, social support and food. Therefore, according to the social exchange theory, the consequent desire to stay in a marriage relationship will wax and wane, depending on how much each partner benefits from the relationship. In the final analysis, the relevance of the theory of social exchange is based on its ability to justify that like marriage, divorce sometimes achieves benefits. The social exchange theory holds that divorce offer solutions to many couples. Just as it harms one of the spouses, children or society, it also provides benefits to each of the parties at stake. Based on the social exchange of benefits and interests persists even in the worst of circumstances and even in the case of divorce. Thus, the management of the post-divorce relationship between the divorcees becomes more feasible especially when children are involved.

In line with the review of related literature, the following objectives and hypotheses were formulated for the study.

Objectives of the study:

- i. To examine the level of perceived causes of divorce in South South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.
- ii. To evaluate the effects of divorce in South South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.
- iii. To examine if there is a difference between the opinion of male and female students on perceived causes of divorce in South South geopolitical zone.
- iv. To examine if there is difference between the opinion of male and female students on the effects of divorce in South South geopolitical zone.
- v. To determine strategies for effective control of divorce in South South zone of Nigeria.

Hypotheses of the Study:

- H₁: There is no significant difference between the opinion of male and female students on perceived causes of divorce in South South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.
- H₂: There is no significant difference between the opinion of male and female students on the effects of divorce in South South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted the survey research designed to determine the perceived causes and effects of divorce in South South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Participations

Six hundred (600) participants were drawn from universities in South South selected by means of stratified random sampling technique to ensure a balanced representation of age and gender. A visit to each university enabled the identification of class times and venues where the study might be introduced to the students. All participants were guaranteed anonymity, confidentiality and the freedom to withdraw from the study at any stage. In addition, participants were given the opportunity to complete questionnaire in English language at their respective schools. The administration of the questionnaire took place within a period of five weeks. Permission to involve undergraduate students in the study was obtained from the respective university Dean of Student Affairs.

Data Collection

The research instrument for the study was the structured questionnaire. This was a modified form of the research questionnaire used by Amato and Keith (1991); Amato and Rogers (1997); Mattoo and Ashai (2012) and Olaniyi (2015). This modification was necessary to better address the new respondents in a different environment. Participants were given up to one week to complete and return the questionnaire. The structured questionnaire covers reasons, effects and strategies for effective control of divorce. Out of the 600 copies of questionnaire administered, 487 were retrieved giving us a response rate of 81.2%. Out of the 487 respondents, 235 were male students and 252 were female students as shown in table below.

Table 1: Distribution of Questionnaire and Response Rate

S/N	South - South State	University	Questionnaire distributed	Questionnaire Retrieved	Male	Female	Percentage Retrieved
1	Delta	Delta State University, Abraka	100	85	41	44	14.2
2	Edo	University of Benin	100	86	39	47	14.3
3	Rivers	Rivers State Univeristy	100	74	35	39	12.3
4	Bayelsa	Niger Delta University	100	87	46	41	14.5
5	Akwa-Ibom	University of Uyo	100	76	42	34	12.7
6	Cross Rivers	University of Calabar	100	79	32	47	13.2
	Total		600	487	235	252	81.2

Source: Questionnaire Administered, 2019

Data Analysis

Data collected were analyzed using percentage, mean and t-test with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

Table 2: Respondents' Demographic Information

S/N	Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
1	Gender of respondents	Male	235	48.3	48.3
		Female	252	51.7	100.0
		Total	487	100.0	
2	Age of respondents	15-20 years	97	19.9	19.9
		21-25 years	134	27.5	47.4
		26 – 30 years	152	31.2	78.6
		Above 30 years	104	21.4	100.0
		Total	487	100.0	
3	Marital Status of respondents	Single	309	63.4	63.4
		Married	156	32.0	95.9
		Divorced	17	3.5	98.9
		Widowed	5	1.1	100.0
		Total	487	100.0	
4	Study level of	100 level	57	11.7	11.7

	200 level	68	14.0	25.7
	300 level	93	19.1	44.8
	400 level	125	25.7	70.5
	800 level	78	16.0	86.5
	900 level	66	13.5	100.0
	Total	487	100.0	

Source: Researchers' Fieldwork, 2019

Table 2 shows that 51.7% of the respondents (252) were female. The male respondents comprised 235 or 48.3% of the total respondents. Age group of 26 – 30 years which comprised of 152 (31.2%) accounted for the majority of the respondents. Most respondents, representing 309 (63.4%) were single and a total of 125 (25.7%) were in 400 level.

Table 3: Perception of Students on Causes of Divorce in South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria

N =487

s/n	Items/ Description	\bar{x}	SD	Remark
1	Infidelity	3.68	.38	Agreed
2	Unmet emotional needs (feeling less)	3.33	.63	Agreed
3	Wrong selection of spouse	3.63	.41	Agreed
4	Sexual incompatibility	2.90	.74	Agreed
5	Lack of mutual respect	2.66	.77	Agreed
6	Infertility	3.74	.34	Agreed
7	Fiery temper (anger)	3.58	.44	Agreed
8	Communication defects	3.40	.60	Agreed
9	Extreme sexual orientation	2.83	.73	Agreed
10	Interference of spouse family	3.53	.53	Agreed
11	Immaturity / absence of love	3.52	.57	Agreed
12	Loss of sexual desire	3.26	.65	Agreed

13	Domestic violence	3.04	.69	Agreed
14	Cultural differences	3.17	.67	Agreed
15	Poverty	3.09	.69	Agreed
16	Unemployment	2.71	.76	Agreed
17	Psychological problem	2.54	.81	Agreed
18	Suspicious	2.38	.79	Agreed
19	Egocentrism	2.63	.75	Agreed
20	Lack of patient/perseverance	2.80	.71	Agreed
21	A large difference in age	2.36	.86	Agreed
22	Over dependency	2.72	.79	Agreed
23	Force marriage/social incompatibility	2.85	.77	Agreed
24	Lack of cooperation	2.68	.76	Agreed
25	Unwholesome social behavior	2.50	.80	Agreed
26	Difference in religion	2.40	.83	Agreed
27	Desire for male child	2.92	.72	Agreed
28	Negligence/insensitivity to marital responsibilities	2.96	.71	Agreed
29	Alcohol addiction	2.98	.70	Agreed
30	Declines in marital quality	2.67	.78	Agreed

Source: Researchers' Fieldwork, 2019

Table 3 revealed that the thirty items had their mean ranging from 2.36 – 3.74 which indicates that all the variables were considered the causes of divorce or marital separation.

Table 4: Perception of Respondents on Possible Effects of Divorce
N = 487

s/n	Items/ Description	\bar{x}	SD	Remark
1	Health problem (chronic strains)	3.67	.57	Agreed
2	Social insecurity	2.93	.70	Agreed
3	Decrease in self –worth	3.64	.49	Agreed
4	Suicidal tendencies	3.64	.55	Agreed
5	High rates of juvenile challenges	2.81	.66	Agreed
6	Difficulties in upbringing of children	3.63	.53	Agreed
7	Increase in physical assaults	3.60	.53	Agreed
8	Economic insecurity	3.55	.49	Agreed
9	Overburden as single parent	2.71	.60	Agreed
10	Threat to life of couple	2.69	.64	Agreed
11	Poor academic achievement by children	3.55	.64	Agreed
12	Poor emotional health of children	3.48	.57	Agreed
13	Negative mentoring for children	3.01	.50	Agreed
14	Depression and psychological trauma of couple/children	2.85	.58	Agreed
15	Sense of failure and guilty	3.40	.48	Agreed
16	Escalation of social vices	3.00	.59	Agreed
17	Increase in life dissatisfaction	2.77	.59	Agreed
18	Teens inability to get married or stay in marriage	3.00	.62	Agreed
19	Feelings of rejection	2.44	.66	Agreed
20	Increase in experience of negative life events by women	3.36	.56	Agreed

Source: Researchers' Fieldwork, 2019

Table 4 revealed that the twenty items had their mean ranging from 2.69 – 3.67 which indicates that all the items were considered as the effects of divorce.

Table 5: Perception of Respondents on Feedings after Divorce

N = 487

s/n	Items/ Description	\bar{x}	SD	Remark
1	Rejected	3.54	.67	Accepted
2	Sense of failure	3.63	.63	Accepted
3	Guilty	3.57	.63	Accepted
4	Depressed	3.73	.51	Accepted
5	Self-disapproval	3.50	.69	Accepted

Source: Researchers' Fieldwork, 2019

Table 5 showed that the five items had their mean ranging from 3.50 – 3.73 which indicates that all the variables were considered as the feelings after divorce.

Table 5: Perception of Respondents on Strategies for Effective Control of Divorce

N = 487

s/n	Items/ Description	\bar{x}	SD	Remark
1	Pre-and post-marital counseling that is affordable	3.77	.32	Agreed
2	Introducing pre-marital courses in higher educational institution curriculum	3.54	.55	Agreed
3	Putting spouse before children	3.66	.47	Agreed
4	De-emphasizing male child or children in marital union	3.55	.58	Agreed
5	Regular renewal of marital vow	3.59	.49	Agreed
6	Defining position of in-laws early in marriage	3.59	.60	Agreed
7	Effective marriage social networking	3.64	.57	Agreed

8	Establishing common family purse/joint account	3.42	.66	Agreed
9	Effective legislation against force/early marriage	3.65	.54	Agreed
10	Legislating against spousal abuse and domestic violence	3.53	.67	Agreed

Source: Researchers' Fieldwork, 2019

Table 5 reveals that the ten items has their mean ranging from 3.42 – 3.77 which indicates that the respondents accepted all the variables as strategies for effective control of divorce.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One:

H₁ There is no significant difference between the opinion of male and female students on perceived causes of divorce in South South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Table 6: Opinion of male and female Students on the Causes of Divorce

Categories respondents	N	\bar{x}	SD	Cal-T	Crit-T	Decision
Male	235	3.64	.58	1.61	1.92	Accepted
Female	252	3.76	.52			

p<0.05

Source: SPSS Output, 2019

According to the results presented in table 6 above, since the calculated 't' (1.61) is less than the critical 't' (1.92) at 0.05 alpha levels, the null hypothesis is therefore accepted. This implies that male and female students' perceptions do not differ in their expression on the causes of divorce in South South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two:

H₂ There is no significant difference between the opinion of male and female students on the effects of divorce in South South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Table 6: Opinion of male and female Students on the Effects of Divorce

Categories respondents	N	\bar{x}	SD	Cal-T	Crit-T	Decision
Male	235	3.07	.56	1.97	1.96	Rejected
Female	252	2.83	.34			

$p < 0.05$

Source: SPSS Output, 2019

Since the calculate 't' (1.97) is greater than the critical 't' (1.96) at 0.05 alpha levels, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that male and female students' perceptions differ in their expression on the effects of divorce in South South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The perceived causes and effects of divorce in Nigeria context were examined in this study. The results amongst others revealed that the major causes of divorce were infertility, primary wrong selection of spouse, fiery temper immaturity/ absence of love, communication defects, unmet emotional needs (feeling less), loss of sexual desire, cultural differences, poverty and domestic violence. While health problems, decrease in self-worth, suicidal tendencies, difficulties in upbringing of children, increase in physical assaults, economic insecurity, poor academic achievement by children, poor emotional health of children and sense of failure and guilty rank high amongst the effects of divorce or marital separation. As predicted, the study also revealed that the major strategies for effective control of divorce were pre and post marital counseling that is affordable, putting spouse before children, effective legislation against forced or early marriage, effective marriage social networking, regular renewal of marital vow (celebrating marriage anniversary) and defining position of in-laws early in marriage. These findings substantially support those of Amato and Keith (1991); Mattoo and Ashai (2012); Olaniyi (2015) and Sulaiman *et al.* (2015).

In relation to the first hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between the opinion of male and female students on perceived causes of divorce, the results showed that the opinion of male and female students' perception do not differ in their expression on the causes of divorce in South South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. In relation to the second hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between the opinion of male and female students on the effects of divorce, the results of the study revealed that the opinion of male and female students' perception differ on the effects of divorce. The findings concur

with the studies of Amato and Rogers (1997) and Boertien (2012) which revealed gender difference in the effects of marital separation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In this study, attempts have been made to underscore the various factors that are responsible for divorce or marital separation in the Nigerian context. The effects of divorce and strategies for effective control of divorce were also examined. The study revealed, through its perceived findings, that divorce has negative effects on the couples, their children and the society at large. The study also revealed that couples who experienced divorce develop the feelings of rejection, sense of failure, guilty, depression and self-disapproval. In addition, the reality of today for single parents and children is that divorce often means a change in school, neighborhood and peer groups. Physical dislocation may ultimately have an influence on many aspects of the children's life, including academic performance, peer relations, psychological well-being and physical health. It is clear that any treatment of the issues surrounding divorce, custody and access is incomplete without an understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence. Failure to take these cases into consideration can only increase the emotional trauma of those involved or worse, increase their physical danger. A marital relationship can be strengthened through keeping certain standards such as love, establishing open communication channels and maintaining a close enjoyable physical contact. Other factors include sharing views on work and raising children as well as traits such as flexibility and realism that can help couples avoid divorce. Therefore, a healthy family enjoys a clear balance between cohesion and adaptability. Olson, 1989 cited in Al-Gharaibeh (2018) highlights eight characteristics of a cohesive family. These are:

- i. Attraction;
- ii. Personal differences and distinction;
- iii. Support and encouragement;
- iv. Attachments;
- v. A sense of psychological security;
- vi. Family bonding and connectedness;
- vii. Care for physical hygiene and appearance;
- viii. Positive affective involvement.

In conclusion, this study has contributed to the literature on perceived causes and effects of divorce in Nigeria. From the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Support systems can help mitigate some of the negative effects associate with divorce. The support can be provided by parents, extended family members, peers and school management. E.g. school management should identify and

- provide children of divorced with curriculum changes and additional facilities to help them cope with divorce.
- ii. Government and non-governmental organizations together should intensify efforts to ensure that all unhappily married spouses have access to pre and post marital counseling that is affordable across the length and breadth of the country. This will help prevent or ameliorate the negative consequences of marital separation.
 - iii. Women are urged to strive to be economically independent. This will help women alleviate the negative economic consequences of divorce.
 - iv. Young men are urged to have a source of livelihood before going into marriage.
 - v. Couples going through a marriage crisis are urged to seek help and counseling from social and family specialists, rather than from only relatives and friends, to resolve marital issues.
 - vi. State and local government authorities should establish counseling centers as a form of social support to help women build effective coping skills and provide a supportive context which may reduce the sense of loneliness and isolation experienced by many divorced adults.
 - vii. University management across the country should introduce and offer the course 'Family and Marriage Counseling' that will help youth to acquire requisite skills and habit culture for successful marital life. Healthy living and negative effects of divorce should be emphasized in the curriculum.
 - viii. The Nigerian movie industry should intensify efforts by directing various drama series and programmers to present the concept of marriage realistically in terms of the challenges facing the family and how to deal with them.
 - ix. There is urgent need in teaching multiple topics on family, marriage and disadvantages of divorce both at secondary and post-secondary schools in order to encourage people to establish effective relationships.
 - x. In the marital relationship the groom and the bride should learn to forgive each other, be patient enough and approached each other more gently and lovingly when reconciliation is required.
 - xi. The Legislature or the Nigerian Law Review Commission should, as a matter of urgency, set legal machinery in motion for a review of the Matrimonial Causes Act with the objective of improving some of the relief initiated to meet with societal expectations and reality.

- xii. Further study is recommended for other researchers to establish the relationship between female education and marital stability.
- xiii. Research on female employment and marital instability is also recommended.

References

- Ahiaoma, I. (2013). The psycho-social effect of parental separation and divorce on adolescents: Implications for counseling in Surulere local government area of Lagos State. *International Journal of Psychology and Counseling*, 5(7), 162-168.
- Al-Gharaibeh, F.M. (2018). Causes of early divorce as perceived by young people in Sharjah: A field study. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 56(1), 49 – 64.
- Al-Ubaidi, B.A. (2017). The psychological and emotional stages of divorce. *Journal of Family, Medicine and Disease Prevention*, 3(3), 1-4.
- Amadi, U.P.N. & Amadi F.N.C. (2014). Marital crisis in the Nigeria society: Cause, consequences and management strategies. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5 (26), 133-143.
- Amato, P.R. & Keith, B. (1991). Parental divorce and the well-being of children: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 110 (1), 26 – 46.
- Amato, P.R. & Rogers, S.J. (1997). A longitudinal study of marital problems and subsequent divorce. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 57 (3) 612 – 624.
- Amato, P.R. (1994). Father –child relations; mother-child relations and offspring psychological well-being in early adulthood. *Journal of Marriage Fam*, 56, 1031 – 1042.
- Amato, P.R. (2000). The consequences of divorce for adults and children. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62 (6), 1269 – 1287.
- Amato, P.R. (2010). Research on divorce: Continuing development and new trends. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72 (3), 650 – 666.
- Blau, P. (1964). *Exchange and power in social life*. New York: John Wiley.

- Boertien, D. (2012). Jackpot? Gender difference in the effects of lottery wins on separation. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 74 (5), 1038 – 1053.
- Booth, A. & Amato, P.R. (2004). Parental pre divorce relations and offspring post-divorce well-being. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 63 (1), 197 – 212.
- Buckwell, J.P. (2010). *Marital crisis resolution coping with adultery*. New York: Cowling Investigation Incorporation.
- Gahler, M. (1998). *Life after divorce. Economic, social and psychological well-being among Swedish adults and children following family dissolution*. Stockholm: Swedish Institute for Social Research.
- Garriga, A. & Harkonen, J. (2009). *The effects of marital instability on children's well-being and intergenerational relations*. Fabra: Universitat Pompeu Fabra.
- Harkonen, J. (2013). *Divorce: Trends, causes, consequences. Stockholm Research Reports in Demography*. Paper Submitted to the Department of Sociology, Stockholm University. Pp. 1 – 39.
- Holy Bible (2012). *The Holy Bible: King James version*. China: Amity Printing Co, Ltd.
- Kelley, H.H., & Thibaut, J. (1978). *Interpersonal relations: A theory of interdependence*. New York: Wiley.
- Kurdek, L.A. (1991). Marital stability and changes in marital quality in newlywed couples. A test of the contextual model. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 8, 27 – 48.
- Lyngstad, T.H. & Jalovaara, M. (2010). A review of the antecedence of union dissolution. *Demographic Research*, 23, 255 – 292.
- Makinde, B. (2004). *Human sexuality education and marital guidance*. Lagos: Raytel Communications.
- Mattoo, N.H. & Ashai, Y. (2012). A study on impact of divorce upon the attitude and social relations of women in Strinagar district. *Study Home Computer Sciences*. 6(2), 113 – 120.
- Mekonnen, Y. Kassa, K. & Ayalew, M. (2019). Prevalence, causes and consequences of divorce in Bahir Dar city, Ethiopia. *African Journal of Social Work*, 9 (1), 73 – 78.

- Olaniyi, A.A. (2015). Analytical study of the causal factors of divorce in African homes. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 5 (14), 18-29.
- Olayinka, K.T. (1987). *The circumcision of women*. Lagos: Lantern Book Ltd.
- Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2010). *International student's edition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Scobie, C.J. (2009). Defining the new testament logic on divorce and re-marriage in a pluralistic context. Retrieved from <http://www.savemumarriagetoday.com/articlefes/manaage>, 13th October, 2019.
- Sulaiman, S.I. Yunus, A.M. & Hassan, N.D. (2015). Factors of divorce and the effects of divorce among the marriage couples in Kano State, Nigeria. *Scholars Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3 (7B), 1234- 1247.
- Wang, H. & Amato, P.R. (2004). Predictors of divorce adjustment: stressors, resources and definitions. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62 (3), 655 – 668.
- Wimalasena, N.A. (2016). An analytical study of definitions of the term “marriage”. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 6(1), 166 – 174.
- Yusuf, R. & Mashi, A.L. (2014). An assessment of Zawarawa mass marriage program in Kano, Nigeria. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanity*, 5 (10), 568 – 578.