

## **PREVALENCE, CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF DIVORCE IN ENUGU URBAN (PSYCHO-SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS)**

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### **Abstract**

*The family occupies a pivotal place in every society. This is because the sanity of any society depends on the family hence the bedrock of every city, state, nation, continent and world. Divorce is not entirely bad because sometimes it a relief to a dysfunctional or unproductive marriage especially when the marriage seems irredeemable by both parties. This is because a healthy family produces a healthy society while a weak family breeds weak, corrupt and disorganized society. Therefore this paper examines the prevalence, causes and consequences of divorce in Enugu urban. Literary research and different academic works in the phenomenon of divorce world over expanded the investigation. Two research questions and hypotheses guided the study accordingly. Researcher structured questionnaire face validated by three experts in the field of Psychology, Sociology and Measurement and Evaluation were administered to randomly selected 120 residents of the city. Descriptive statistics were used to answer the research questions while Chi square was used to analyze the hypotheses. Cronbach alpha was used to obtain the reliability co-efficient of 0.73. The findings of the study indicated that respondents perceived psychological, social and economic factors as some of the major causes of divorce in the city. It was recommended amongst others that traditional and modern marriage counselling should be strengthened in order to give couples training in family responsibilities, communication and conflict management skills.*

**Keywords: Divorce, causes, prevalence, psycho-social, consequences.**

### **Introduction**

Marriage is one of the oldest institutions in any society. In Igbo cultural environment, marriage involves not only the husband and wife but a social institution of mankind which involves two families concerned (Ayogu, 2009). Marriage is a peculiar institution to human

society. Every culture and race has her marriage customs and practices which is the beginning of life-long relationship between members of the society. According to Aroh (2001), marriage has always been a partnership of survival with the presentation and improvement of the human species as its primary purpose. In line with this view, Obi (2006) argued that marriage is as important as social contract ordained by nature for the continuation of human race. Moreover marriage is the beginning of a new family. It is the basic unit of family hood and an avenue where the living, dead and yet unborn meet hence it is a duty, a requirement from the corporate society and a rhythm of life in which everyone must participate (Eyo, 2018). For these desired goals to be achieved in marriage, there is need for harmony, reciprocity, cohesion, fidelity, stability and unconditional love between couples. Unfavorable conditions in marriage or marital instability set in when the aforementioned virtues are lacking hence manifest in forms of conflict, violence, mistrust, constant bickering, neglect and marital crises. This may lead to separation, divorce or marital disintegration. Furthermore marriage is the formal union of man and a woman typically as recognized by law. It is the backbone of socio-economic and political development of any society (Olaniyi, 2015). Its progress signifies harmony while its opposite signals dangers and insecurity in the society.

Divorce is the legal dissolution of a marriage by judgment of a court or accepted custom. Without marriage, there will be no divorce thus divorce is the only ceremony that marks the official end of marriage through legal means just like wedding ceremony marks the official beginning of same marriage. According to Ukpon (2014), divorce is a legal dissolution of marriage relationship or any separation of a man and a woman according to established custom. Therefore there is no divorce except there was a legal bond of marriage hence when people who co-habit decides to separate, it is not seen as being divorced because they are not legally married. The rate of divorced has increased significantly in the last two decades both globally and internally. This is evident in the current trends which suggests that close to 2/3 of new marriages will end in divorce with 32% of couples under 5 years of marriage and 63% before the 10<sup>th</sup> year ending in divorce (Olaniyi, 2015).

Nigeria has witnessed increase in divorce due to its embrace of westernization, globalization, urbanization and industrialization. This has resulted to the relegation of the extended families which is an important unit of the family in conflict resolution and management between couples hence their less involvement in the affairs of its members. Divorce in Enugu urban is a persistent one with immediate and continuous effect with its major causal factor as the social acceptance of divorce for the 21<sup>st</sup> century couples. In fact the mantra changed from *"Together we can turn a house to a home"* to *"i cannot come and kill myself"* which is evident in the increased tolerance and relaxation of negative attitudes towards divorce especially from religious groups and communities. The phenomenon of divorce is increasing receiving attention in all parts of the city with 0.2% of men and 0.3% of women legally dissolving their marriage (The Economist, 2016). In 2018 alone, separation rates in Nigeria recorded a 14% increase with about 3000 divorce cases recorded in Badagry alone (NBS, 2018). In 2019, a report titled *"Deciphering the high rate of divorce in Nigeria"*, Kano state alone had over one million registered divorces. Subsequently, records at federal capital territory high court showed that between 2019 and Feb 2020, there was over 2000 divorce cases filed and about 30 cases being entertained every day (Yakubu, 2020). These findings further revealed that the figure is higher at customary courts and sharia customary courts. In Enugu, no fewer than 55 divorce cases

have been recorded annually according to Justice Pricilla Emehalu during the 2018/2019 legal year while 3, 503 cases were currently pending at the high court and 5,502 in the Magistrate courts respectively (Eze, 2018). In Enugu urban like in every city in the state, there is little documentation on divorce. This is because divorce is often seen as a private hell, a moral failure and social evil yet divorce is on the increase daily hence the researcher sought more answers on the prevalence, causes and consequences in Enugu urban.

### **Causes of divorce in Enugu Urban**

1. Religious reasons: Religion is expected to give stability to the society however sometimes, they do the opposite. Religion can cause divorce when one partner decides to change religion contrary to the agreed religion of the partners. According to Okon (2011), religion which ought to be pillars of the society becomes caterpillar wherewith the society is destroyed. False prophets are also part of the problem through the various false prophesy they give couples and families which end up destroying home.
2. Economic reasons: This is one of the major causes of divorce in Enugu urban. According to Harkonen (2013), a couple's unemployment status, poverty and low income are key factors to divorce. This is because lack of financial ability to solve family problems often causes a flare or frustration which partners with environmental stress and restiveness to cause aggression and anger between couples. This might end up in also in constant arguing, lack of communication and bickering.
3. Spousal age: According to Annang (2003), those who marry for the first time in their teens have 80% tendency to divorce. This is because maturity is an important ingredients in marriage hence these teens divorce because they are not matured intellectually and emotionally thus less likely to make sound marital choices.
4. Domestic violence: This accounts for 80% cases of divorce with most of the violence meted on women by either their spouse or in-laws (Eyo, 2018). This violence can be physical, sexual, verbal, economic and emotional.
5. Denial of conjugal rights where a partner denies the other sexual satisfaction or unwilling to perform sexual act for a long period of time.
6. Infidelity especially by women: This is because in this part of Nigeria, polygamy is part of the custom and generally accepted unlike women who are mandated to stick to one man. In fact in Enugu urban, the mantra is that "*men are polygamous in nature*", therefore a woman is expected to tolerate infidelity from his partner. However when reverse is the case, the woman is victimized and stigmatized for cheating on the husband leading to divorce.
7. Professionalism: In Enugu urban women are considered inferior to men hence are culturally bound to become house wives and under the headship of the man. In cases where they work, they are restricted to certain profession that will compel them into total care of the household including children like teaching and petty trading while the man as the head of the house goes about freely to cater for the family by engaging in every kind of profession and job. Therefore, when women move out of the status quo to engage in so-called men's profession or job, they are tagged promiscuous and prostitutes. This leads to their partners feeling intimidated by their achievement, therefore some men resort to various ways of suppressing the woman whom they believed should be under them hence resulting to degrees of crisis and violence resulting to divorce.

8. Educational attainment: In Enugu urban the popular belief is that the more educated a woman is, the more stubborn and less submissive she becomes. This is because when a woman is educated, she becomes well enlightened on what her rights are under the boundaries of marriage. Since the men of the city believe a woman's place is under the man, they become threatened also in the marriage. This is because the woman understands her rights and obligations in the marriage therefore she is being looked at as less submissive, promiscuous and stubborn hence leads to role confusion and identity crisis in the marriage.
9. Unrealistic Expectations: Prior to marriage spouses may have certain expectations especially women who see marriage as a giant achievement and even escape from poverty. Also beliefs and mindset drawn from romantic movies and books clouds some of their judgment on what the reality is all about in marriage. When such social, religious, economic and academic expectations among others are not met, the marriage bond may suffer and even lead to divorce.
10. Westernization: Three decades ago, divorce was frowned upon in Enugu urban. This is because Igbo culture advocated perseverance, tolerance, unity and togetherness. However with the advent of technology the world became a global village hence what was once frowned at was accepted as a way of life through globalization, internet and cultural exchange leading to divorce being accepted as the only way out of marital crisis and problems. Individuality and selfishness was advocated while communal life, extended family ties and tolerance was relegated and sacrificed on the altar of "*I cannot come and kill myself*".

### **Psycho-Social implications of divorce in Enugu Urban**

Different research work on divorce have revealed a lot of negative effects of divorce especially on women and children who are the most adversely affected in divorce cases. The most significant and noticeable effect in Enugu urban is the dramatic change in the standard of living. Studies have revealed that women face roughly 30% decline in the standard of living they enjoyed while married. The decline rate is even higher due to the fact that vast majority of women in Enugu urban are housewives (Ayogu, 2009). Moreover in most divorce cases, women retain custody of their children thus children's school fees, medical bills and other expenses are catered for by the women with little or nothing as child support from the fathers thereby putting the mothers in more pressure to care for the kids. When parents' divorce, children are the most affected and likely to suffer emotionally, develop low self-esteem, behavioural problems, anxiety, depression and mood disorders. This is because children are usually treated as pawns from moving from one parent to another to the hatred over one parent in order to gain favour with another thus they end up so destroyed, isolated and abused. Some of the children end up growing with guilt for their parent's fight and divorce, develop trust issues and hatred for marriages and other relationships. This is because the family is the primary agent of socialization. This is also evident in the number of delinquent from broken homes which increases the level of school drop-out who eventually become street children. Furthermore, socially it is difficult for the women to re-marry after divorce. This is as a result of stigma and moral failure and disrespect faced by women who are seen as the light of their homes hence any failure is believed to be as a result of the woman's inability to do the right thing for her home. Also religion especially Christianity makes it hard for the women with the belief that she is committing adultery therefore must wait for the death of

the husband before re-marriage. If she re-marries while her divorced husband is still living, she is called adulterous. Furthermore, when couples divorce, their social circle changes from doing things as couples to singlehood. Divorce changes the whole family dynamic and family members and friends may have difficulty maintaining relationships with divorced parties as they feel forced to take sides. Divorce also leads to poor performances of children in school whose minds always wander on the difficulty at home instead of concentrating on their academics. This is partly because divorced parents especially women become busier in order to provide for their children hence unable to help children with their academic work thereby leading to increased school dropout. Some of the children resort to experimentation with drugs, alcohol and sex due to lack of parental supervision. Employees going through divorce can experience higher level of absenteeism, stress and health issues. These factors might lead to exhibition of poorer performance and lower productivity at workplace (Jennifer, 2020).

### **Theoretical framework**

The essence of theoretical framework in a study of this nature is to establish scientific justifications why certain phenomenon occurs as it were with possibility of empirical verification hence the theoretical framework of this study is based on the following theories: Frustration-Aggression and Functionalist theory was used for this study because its major proposition was that human needs and environmental stress can propel them towards misunderstanding or conflict in marriage. The theory argues that every human have basic need in and during marriage and in fact marriage is seen as a stepping stone to a better future and partnership between two people hence failure to satisfy them results in frustration and consequently leading the frustrated individual to aggression. According to Ajayi&Nwogwugwu (2014), people are motivated to act aggressively through a drive induced by frustration hence frustration arises when goal attainment is blocked while aggression is an action aimed at removing the perceived stumbling blocks. Thus as long as couples are not provided economically with opportunities for self-actualization and showcase of talent, creativity and potential in their marriage; the tendency to be taking out the frustration on their partner will continue to exist. Meanwhile Functionalist approach sees divorce as the consequences of malfunctioning social structure of the society which exerts a definite pressure upon individuals in the society to engage in their purposes and pursuit of individual happiness. Since the foundation of every healthy relationship is shared values and preferences. Relating it to divorce, it serves as a purpose for divorce situation where everyone has their own reasons and purposes for giving up on the marriage. This is evident in the increase of divorce among men and women of the city who are all looking out for their own individual well-being and not collective objectives as advocated by marriage.

### **Purpose of the study**

The specific objectives of the study were:

- a: To examine the relationship between causes of divorce and it's prevalence in Enugu urban
- b: To examine the relationship between psycho-social consequences of divorce and it's prevalence in Enugu urban
- c: The above two specific objectives were structured and used as research question at alpha level of 0.05

### **Research Hypothesis**

The following hypothesis guided the study at  $P < 0.05$

H01: There is no significant relationship between causes of divorce and its prevalence in Enugu urban city at the alpha level of 0.05.

H02: There is no significant relationship between psycho-social consequences of divorce and its prevalence in Enugu urban city at the alpha level of 0.05.

### **Methods of Research**

The study design was survey. A survey design is that in which generalizations are made over the entire population from a sample population (Uzoagulu, 2013). The design was used because it allows for the description of conditions and situations as they exist in their natural setting. The area of the study was Enugu urban city. The sample of the study was 120 residents selected using multistage random sampling from five clusters of marital status, gender, age, educational background, employment status. 24 respondent was selected from each cluster and administered the instrument called "prevalence-causes-and-consequences-of-divorce-in-Enugu-urban" with two structured answers of Yes and No. Method of data collection was face-to-face administration and collection after every rating was completed by the respondent. The data was collected, collated and analyzed. Instrument was validated by three experts (Psychology, Sociology and Measurement and Evaluation) whose inputs were incorporated before the final copies were administered. Reliability test showed significant relationship between prevalence, causes and consequences of divorce at 0.76. Method of analysis was descriptive statistics and chi square.

### **Results**

**H01: There will be no significant relationship between causes of divorce and its prevalence in Enugu urban city.**

**Table 1: Chi square ( $\chi^2$ ) analysis of the relationship between causes of divorce and its prevalence in Enugu urban city.**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Responses Yes</b>	<b>Responses No</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b><math>\chi^2</math> Cal</b>	<b><math>\chi^2</math>Crit</b>
<b>Causes of divorce</b>	<b>52(40.25)</b>	<b>17(28.75)</b>	<b>69</b>		<b>3.84</b>
<b>Prevalence of divorce</b>	<b>18(29.75)</b>	<b>33(21.25)</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>19.37</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>120</b>		

Data on Table 1 showed the results of the first hypothesis analyzed. The values indicated a relationship between causes of divorce and its prevalence. Therefore null hypothesis was rejected and its alternate accepted.

**H02: There is no significant relationship between psycho-social consequences of divorce and its prevalence in Enugu urban city.**

**Table 2: Chi square ( $\chi^2$ ) analysis of the relationship between psycho-social consequences of divorce and its prevalence in Enugu Urban city.**

Variables	Responses Yes	Responses No	Total	$\chi^2$ Cal	$\chi^2$ Crit
Psycho-social consequences of divorce	41(32.78)	28(36.25)	69		3.84
Prevalence of divorce	35(26.78)	16(24.23)	51	9.25	
Total	63	57	120		

Table 2 showed the first null hypothesis analyzed. The figures indicated that prevalence of divorce is affected by psycho-social consequences of divorce hence the relationship. Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected and its alternate accepted.

### Discussion of Findings

The result from table 1 shows that there is a significant relationship between causes of divorce and prevalence of divorce hence the acceptance of the alternate hypothesis. This view is supported by Ayogu (2009) who opined that economic situations like unemployment, poverty and low income causes frustration and anger thus leading to couples seeing their partners as part of the problem and subsequently venting their anger and frustrations on them. As a result instead of being solace and shelter for themselves, they end up posing a physical, social and psychological threat to their partners. The result from table 2 reflected the fact that significant relationship exist between consequences of divorce and prevalence of divorce. The result is consistent with Olaniyi (2015) who maintained that adequate knowledge of the consequences of divorce in today's world will help in mediating family crisis and conflicts. This is because healthy families produce healthy societies vice versa.

### Conclusion

The family occupies a pivotal place in every society. It is the bedrock of the state and nation. Therefore for every city to be at peace, the family must be at peace first. This is because the sanity of the cities will never rise above the family. Divorce is not bad per se however when it becomes the order of the day, then it calls for emergency mediation in the family system and structure. Since divorce is a major challenge in our world today, there is need for more studies on ways of bringing back the lost glory of the families as the family life is a life of commitment. Couples must be committed to giving their best in the best interest of the children, themselves and the society at large. The nuclear and extended family structure should be brought back and integrated into the crisis mediation and management of families.

### Recommendations

Following the findings of the study, these recommendations are made:

- 1: Marital counselling should be carried out at grassroots level through community based organizations in partnership with extended families.
- 2: Counsellors should liaise with priests, catechists, evangelists, pastors and imams in the areas of need to enable appropriate channel of information to the grassroots.

- 3: Policies that will strengthen marriage and reform divorce laws to make divorce harder to obtain. These measures should be designed to break up harder to do by requiring proof of faults or extending waiting period require before divorce is granted.
- 4: Couples should be encouraged to participate in marital education before getting married and in the process of marriage.
- 5: Child marriages should be discouraged since maturity is an important factor in long-lasting marriages.

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