CAUSES OF DIVORCE AS PERCEIVED BY STUDENTS OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN KWARA STATE

By
S. H. Umoh And H. Adeyemi

ABSTRACT
The incidence of divorce which is a complex phenomenon in human relationship is assuming unacceptable proportion in Nigeria, especially as divorce has been found to have social, psychological and educational effects on children. The purpose of this study was to find out what the cause of divorce are in Nigeria, and what students of tertiary institutions of Kwara State perceive to be the causes.

Six hundred students, consisting of three hundred males and 300 females were randomly selected and given copies of the cause of Divorce questionnaire (CDR) to fill. The items in the CDR were constructed in a liker format with a 4-point scoring technique. A Test-retest method covering an interval of 4 weeks yielded a reliability coefficient of 86. The results showed that the student perceived barrenness as the number one cause of divorce. This was followed by repeated sickness of any of the spouses. Religious differences and sexual problems occupied the third and fourth places respectively. The least possible causes were cross-cultural marriages and age differences. Counselors were encouraged to carry out more studies in this area so that acceptable solutions may be found for the problems of family disorganization through divorce.

INTRODUCTION
The family that emerges from a marriage has some basic functions which make it unique. Bilton, Bonnett, Jones, Sheard, Stanworth and Webster (1981) observed that in all societies the family must perform some basic functions involving conception and birth, regular intercourse, socialization and maintenance functions of providing economic support and physical protection for the children as they mature. In fact, each spouse is a source of emotional support and companionship for the other (Filani, 1985).

In Nigeria today, the influence of industrialization and urbanization has affected the social system of the country, a part of which is the marriage system. As new cultural patterns, new aspirations and behavioural norms have emerged and as the traditional social ties undergo changes, social control becomes weakened. The family is a sensitive institution and it monitors all these changes and reacts to them by experiencing disorganization.

Since the traditional family structure has been so seriously Littered, the functions have equally been affected, and many of it important roles are now known to be associated with many forms of instability. Marital instability according to Filani 1984), is a breakdown in communication among couples resulting n constant arguments, verbal and physical aggression psychological ill-health, emotional and physical separation and sometimes divorce. Filani further noted that marital instability can result from death of spouse, desertion of the spouses, mutual separation of spouses and legal separation of spouses. Of all these factors of marital instability, divorce seems to be the most popular and most copiously documented.

Divorce, according to Bohanna (1973), is a complex phenomenon n human relationship and that it takes place in six stages, these are emotional divorce stage, economic divorce stage,
legal divorce stage, co-parental divorce stage, community and psycho, divorce stages. Thus, Lands (1975) explained that divorce comes as a climax to a long story of unhappiness and it provides a legal way out of a situation which one or both parties have considered intolerable.

Literature review on marriage shows a number of factors causing divorce in marriage. For instance, Thornton (1985) indicated age and age at marriage as the two most powerful predictors of divorce; Otite and Ogionwo (1981) argued that childlessness in a marriage can lead to divorce in Nigeria; Olayinka (1987) stressed the importance of communication in marital stability; extramarital sex and discrepancy in mate traits have been stressed by Ezenkwu (1988) and Decker (1977) respectively. Olusanya (1970) and Yagoob (1984) identified lack of children, economic factors, communication problems, interference of in-laws and education of spouses as the causes of divorce.

The prevalence of divorce cases in the world today cannot be overemphasized. Weikel and Wilson (1986) stated that divorce in U.S. by 79% between 1970 to 1977 and that one third or more of the marriages of people aged 25 to 35 years will end in divorce. Grebe (1986) also stated that in 1976, a National Centre for Health Statistics study projected that by early 1980s, 49% of all marriages would end in divorce and in fact in the U.S. during 1983, there were 10.5 marriages per 1,000 people and 5.0 divorces per 1,000 people (National Centre for Health statistics Personal Communication (1984).

Statistical records of marital instability are not compiled in Nigeria as yet. But Newspaper often report cases of marital disruption in weekly basis in Lagos and its environs. For example Solana (1990) reported the case of kids (aged 12 to 16 years) who were of broken homes in the Weekend Concord of September 22nd 1990. These kids according to him have become a nuisance at the Lagos City Hall during parties as they parade and fan invitees in bids to earn a living. In Kwara State, the Ministry of Information and Culture recorded that 1,697 Marriages were registered for both the Churches and Marriage Registry from 1984-1988. During the same period (1984-88) there were 12, 104 divorces (Court case file, Child Welfare Centre and Oja-oba Area Courts, Ilorin). According to these records, the rate of divorces over marriages is at 71% approximately 7 divorces to every marriage (7:1). Ahmed (1990) has opined that the rate of divorce in Ilorin and its environs is increasing at an alarming rate.

This rate of divorce should strike counsellors as a problem worthy of serious therapeutic attention because it is one of the most terrifying sources of psychological, social and educational problems in the society.

Since a large proportion of families are experiencing marital disorganization, counsellors should find practical solutions to minimize the problems. Divorce has been found to have social, psychological and educational effects on the children of divorced parents, the spouses themselves and even the general public. Katu (1988) stressed that most social misfits found in Nigerian urban areas are products of broken homes. Frank (1980) also noted that even the spouses themselves have been found to experience loneliness, stress and strain. In view of these, there is the need for experts to find means of ensuring marital stability so as to avoid the constant breakages marital relationship.

Thus, Olusanya (1970) found education to be a factor that positively affects marital stability and concluded that the more the education of the spouses the more stable their marriage will be. In an earlier study, Click and Norton (1971) observed that men who complete college have lower probability of divorce than men who complete only high school or who leave college without graduating. This therefore, shows that education makes for an increase sense of responsibility within marriage. It is therefore the aim of this study to find out what married students of tertiary institutions in Ilorin perceive as the causes of divorce so that solutions to the incessant divorce cases within our society might be found.
PROCEDURE

Six hundred students consisting of three hundred males and 300 females were randomly selected and given copies of the causes of Divorce Questionnaire (CDQ) to fill and return to the researchers. The CDQ consisted of 30 items covering various possible causes of divorce as were identified in the literature on divorce and separation.

The 30 items of the CDQ were grouped under 10 major areas, namely financial, sexual, social, educational, cross-cultural, age differential, repeated sicknesses, psychological, religious, and barrenness causes. The number of items under each cause was three, lesse ten areas were the major ones identified in the literature s the causes of divorce. The items in the CDQ were constructed in Likert format with a 4 point scoring technique. The respondents were free to Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree or Strongly Disagree of any of the statements in the CDQ.

In the first draft, 20 students were given copies of the CDQ to complete. After an interval of 4 weeks, the 20 students who did not form part of the final administration were given copies of the DQ. Their reactions in the two administrations were correlated sing Pearson Product Moment Correlation technique. A coefficient $> f.86$ ensured the stability of the instrument. The content divorce was ensured because the items were the known causes of divorce and separation in Nigeria (Ipaye, 1982; Bakare 1970).

In the analysis, the reasons were collapsed into two areas - agree and Disagree. The numbers of the students who agreed and disagreed were computed and means were found. Concerning the comparison of their responses by sex, their scores were computed. The results are found in tables 1 and 2.

Table 1
Distribution of Respondents on Basis of Their Perception Of Causes Of Divorce

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>CAUSES</th>
<th>NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AGREE</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Sexual</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>53.00</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Educational Disparity</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Cross-cultural</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Age-differential</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Repeated sicknesses</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Psychological</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Religious diff.</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>59.00</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Barrenness</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>74.00</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 1, the major cause of divorce is barrenness. There were 444 (74%) respondents who felt this way. Second in importance was Repeated Sickness in the family with 356 (59.3%) respondents. This is followed by religious differences in the fourth place with 342 respondents. Sexual causes was reacted to by 315 (53%) of the respondents, and Educational Disparity of the spouses and psychological factors were responded to by 312
(52%) and 307 (51.2%) respondents respectively. The least possible causes of divorce as reacted to by the respondents included Cross-cultural factors, 116 (19.3%), Age Disparity of the spouses (35%), social causes *(45.8%) and financial causes (47.5%).

In addition to the distribution of respondents on the basis of causes of divorce, the reaction of the students were converted into scores, Strongly Agree attracted 4 points while Agree attracted .3 points*. Moreover, Disagree attracted 2 points, and Strongly Disagree was assigned 1 point. The range of score was therefore 1-4. Four of the perceived causes as reacted to by the respondents were tabulated out for comparison by sex. The result is presented in table 2.

Table 2
T-test Analysis of the Perception of Male and Female Respondents on the 4 major Causes of Divorce.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Sd</th>
<th>t-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Barrenness</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>78.30</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>78.1</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Religious Differences</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>12.56</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Repeated Sickness</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>10.25</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>10.25</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Sexual Problems</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>55.2</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results showed that male and female respondents did not differ significantly in their perception of the 4 most loaded causes of Divorce.

DISCUSSION

Discussions on divorce often place blame on age at marriage and age disparity of the spouses (Thornton, 1985). Olayinka (1987) and Bunpass and Sweet (1972) have indicated that marital stability increases when both spouses are matured enough to marry and when there is less disparity in the age of the parties. In the present study age disparity was not considered as the major cause of Divorce possibly because men are usually much older than their wives. If marriage is to succeed, the man has to prepare himself educationally and financially. This usually takes time.

Adultery and extra-marital relationships are usually cited as one of the commonest problems that cause Instability in marriage (Ezekwukwu, 1988). In the present study sex related problems were not prominent as the major cause of divorce. In Africa where polygamy is allowed, it is difficult for a man to be accused of adultery unless the extra-marital affairs involve a married woman. A married woman who ventures to engage in extra-marital relationship may consider herself divorced.

Barrenness, infertility, and impotence were perceived by the respondents (444 of them) as the major cause of divorce. Africans value children, and the ability to procreate whether for the man or for the woman is a measure of sexual virility. Moreover it assures the spouses of human representation long after they might have left the present system. Otite and Ogiwonwo (1981), and Katu (1986) have stressed the fact that the pride of a Nigerian woman lies in her ability to have issues which is one good reason they marry in the first place.
The fact that religious differences and repeated sickness such as genetic diseases were ranked as the second and third causes respectively accentuates the importance of genetic and religious counselling before marriage contract. Issues of religion are usually emotionally charged. It is in the interest of spouses to transcend religious differences in order for marital harmony to prevail. Genetic diseases such as sickle cell diseases can cause marital disruption. The reason is that a sickler may experience physical crisis every now and then and then the emotional regret may lead to eventual break-up of a marital relationship.

An interesting feature in the finding of this study concerned financial causes and Cross-cultural factors as elements in divorce. Only 47.5% of the respondents felt that the problems of finances can lead to divorce. Money usually is a measure of power, influence and status. But money is a measure of value and it is sometimes perceived as the root of all evils. A rich man may use his riches to destabilize his family. This may take the form of keeping chains of women and/or marrying many of them. Any mention of cross-cultural marriages usually sends cold shivers in the spines of most parents. Cross-cultural marriages like inter-racial marriages are usually emotionally and stereotypically charged. The assumption is usually held that such a relationship will eventually end in a divorce. In this current study only 19.3% of the respondents felt that way. Cross-cultural marriages is found mostly among the educated middle classes, the reaction of the respondents may be informed by the simple fact they are educated, and that they can think and act independently.

COUNSELLING IMPLICATIONS

Lands (1975) stressed the fact that people often think that divorce always comes as a sudden impulsive act whereas in reality it comes as a climax to a long story of unhappiness and disharmony. When people enter into marital relationships, they usually do not anticipate the probability that the relationship may one day end up in divorce.

In previous studies Abioye (1985) and Olusanya (1970). identified barrenness, economic factors, communication problems and interference of in-law as the major causes of divorce. In the present study, barrenness, repeated sicknesses, religious differences and sex-related causes were perceived as possible causes of divorce.

Medical Science has advanced to such a degree that barrenness and infertility can be handled without too much effort. Sickle cell anemia can be controlled nowadays through medical science. A Counsellor who has information about where clients can get needed assistance will be of invaluable assistance to such clients.

In recent times, religious intolerance has led to regular losses of human lives in some parts of the country. The trend of religious intolerance today is religious consciousness and religious stereotyping. Issues about religious matters are usually emotionally charged, with unpredictable consequences. Marriages involving people of different religious persuasions can "be helped" to succeed if premarital counselling is provided to the couples before they tie the nuptial knot. Such premarital counselling may prevent eventual break-up of marital relationships due to religious differences.

About eighty percent of the students did not consider cross-cultural factors as the major cause of divorce in Nigeria. This may be explained in part especially as the prevalence of cross-cultural marriages is relatively low. Since very few people enter into cross-cultural marriages it stands to reason that the frequency of divorce will equally be small. Otherwise one may wish to reason that since very few divorces are occurring among cross-cultural couples, couples who desire stability in marital relationships should look for partners in other cultures or Sub-cultures.

Educational disparity of the spouses was perceived by 52% of respondents as the major cause of divorce in Nigeria. This refers to a situation where one of the parties is very highly educated and the other party is poorly educated. Men who married before they, received
University education usually find their wives check ... in a number of situations. They may sometimes have differential perception over many life situations especially because the man's educational qualification may put him in a different social status positions with different value systems. A situation like this can lead to marital disharmony. The best suggestion a counsellor can give in such a situation is for the couples to help each other to receive additional education or training.

In 1988, Ezeukwu noted that adultery was the commonest cause of divorce and other marital-related problems. (Divorce cases in Nigeria as noted earlier is assuming unprecedented proportions). Extra-marital affairs are probably more common among men than among women. In a culture where polygamy is allowed a man can hardly feel embarrassed for engaging in extra-marital relationships.

Lee (1977) has argued that men who engage in extra-marital affairs do so to break domestic boredom and the monotony, to raise their ego and to boost their self-esteem. Extra-marital affairs then serves to preserve marital relationship, as the man has renewed interest in the wife.

The reverse is the case for a woman. A woman who feels that her husband has had extra-marital affairs so retaliates by engaging in it may have to brace up for the consequence. Counsellors should elucidate this vital fact to women who are intending to lead and maintain at happy family.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The causes 'and consequences of divorce at present are am area that current research interest should be focussed. The present study sought to ascertain the causes of divorce as perceived by students of tertiary institutions in Kwara State. The incidence of divorce' is not limited to Kwara State. Any future research should cover a wider area. Moreover, the instrument used should equally be diversified to include many other causes of divorce. The population used for the study was limited to students of tertiary institutions in Kwara State. Perhaps a survey of the causes of divorce from the point of view of those who have experienced it may be more tenable. Lastly, it is hoped that the study will inspire counsellors to examine the institution of the family more extensively so that marital disharmony and dispute may be handled and aborted before they have opportunity to mature into divorce.

REFERENCES


Filani, T.O. (1985). The effect 'of communication skill training and cognitive restructuring on


