

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH DIVORCE AMONG MARRIED COUPLES IN PUBLIC SERVICE OF ENUGU STATE: IMPLICATIONS FOR CONSELLING

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Abstract

This study was conducted to ascertain the factors associated with divorce among couples in Public Service of Enugu State and its implications for counselling. The sample for the study was 300 divorced husbands and wives working in public service of Enugu State, which were drawn from 10 local government areas through multi-stage random sampling technique. The instrument used for the study was factors associated with divorce among couples instrument (FAWDACI). The test of internal consistency of the FAWDACI was established using test-retest method which yielded 0.78. The data obtained with the instrument were analyzed using mean and t-test statistic. Mean was employed in answering the research questions while t-test statistic was used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 significant levels. Findings of the study indicated that high incidence of socio-economic factors, religious factors and extended family relatives were major factors associated with divorce among couples in public service of Enugu State. It was recommended that Enugu State government should improve the working conditions of her workers through regular payment of workers' entitlements. Moreso, various religious denominations should institute serious marriage counselling programmes for people intending to get married especially for those marriages cutting across religious boundaries.

Key Words: *Divorce, Married Couple, Civil Servants and Counselling.*

Introduction

Marriage is an institution ordained by God as well as by the culture of any society (Maduakonam, 1991). Marriage is a recognized necessary precursor to child bearing and the survival of the human species in any society (Nwobodo, 2013). If there are disorganized family contexts (divorce) among the citizens of any society, then the society cannot but reflect the deficiencies in all its facets.

Divorce is the permanent dissolution of marriage, otherwise referred to as couples who are married to each other. In other words, it is an official termination of a legitimate and valid marriage, canceling the legal duties and responsibilities of marriage and dissolving the bonds of marriage between two persons (Wikipedia, 2013). Moreso, Appathurai (2012) noted that divorce is dissolution of an existing marital union by a civil court. Divorce could therefore, be regarded as family disorganization resulting from marriage breakdown, or ended through the deliberate choice of the individuals involved.

The rates of divorce among couples worldwide are on daily increase. There is nearly unanimous opinion among social scientists and anthropologists that the number of divorces in most parts of the world is increasing day by day in comparison with the number of marriages that are registered (Hugh: and Glick, 1976 in Appathuria. 2012). At the present moment, it is estimated that nearly 50 per cent of current marriages are heading for dissolution (Appathuria, 2012).

This incessant rate of divorce, separation, annulment and other forms of marital instability have become a serious social problem especially among the civil servants in Nigeria because it is heart-breaking, affects their children's well-being and generates low productivity among the affected couples in the public service. The tendency of low productivity among appreciable number of divorced couples in civil service in Nigeria suggests that the Nigeria New Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agenda may be denied to the nation. This situation demands that certain factors associated with divorce among couples in public service need to be identified with a view at examining the place of family counselling in ameliorating the ugly situation.

Several factors have been reported in literature as militating against the stability of marriage which subsequently results to divorce. For instance, Appathurai (2012) while writing on dissolution/nullity under civil law and common law reported that the grounds commonly pleaded by the petitioner include that, the respondent has committed adultery or has treated the petitioner include that, the respondent has committed adultery or has treated the petitioner with such cruelty as to cause a reasonable apprehension in the mind of the petitioner that it would be harmful or injurious for the petitioner to live with the respondent (Appathurai, 2012). Moreso, educational level of the couples involved in the divorce seems to be responsible for the notion of gender equality seriously campaigned by women. Yet more, the offer of education to women has necessitated their offer of employment in civil service thereby enabling them to earn as much as or higher than their husbands. Among the most influential factors that causes divorce has been, and still are, the sharp increase in the educational level of young adults, especially women, and the closely associated rapid increase in the employment of women outside home (Glick, 2010), especially in public service. Women with high incomes are much more likely to be single or divorced than are either house-wives or women employed in occupations with average remuneration (Nye, 2011). Other factors associated with increase in divorce include, a growing unwillingness to endure unhappiness in marriage (Bell, 2011), effect of modern technology, psychological and economic factors, liberation of women and the rise of women's movements (appathurai, 2012), and the age of bride below the age of 22 and the groom below the age of 25 (Patrick, 2010). It has been reported (Nwobodo, 1997) that parental divorce is associated with cases of robbery, drug abuse, rape, drunkenness and other forms of juvenile delinquency among boys as well as drop out syndrome, prostitution, elopement and other related deviant behaviours among girls. It appears that there could be other factors associated with divorce among couples especially among couples in public service that are not available in literature. These studies will therefore, fill the gap of scarcity of information concerning the factors associated with divorce among couples in public service of Enugu State. The study is limited to problems and socio cultural variables associated with divorce among couples in public service of Enugu state. It does not extent to couples working in private establishments such as firms, trading or organizations.

The major purpose of the study was to identify the factors associated with divorce among couples in Enugu State public service. Specifically, the study intend to:

Socio-economic factors include delay in payment of salaries, poor working conditions, meagre salaries, and so on. Extended family relatives include, parents-in-law, other family members, brothers and sisters-in-law, and so on. Religious factors include inter-faith marriages, polygamy and so on.

- i. Ascertain the extent to which socio-economic factors are associated with divorce among married public servants.
- ii. Ascertain the extent to which extended family relatives are associated with divorce among married public servants.
- iii. Examine the extent to which religious factors are associated with divorce among couples in public service.

Statement of the Problem

Literature search revealed the extent studies have been conducted with regards to causes and consequences of marital dysfunction among couples. Factors such as adultery, women increase in educational level, and employment outside home; age of the couples, liberation of women and the rise of women's movement and influence of modern technology were reported in literature (Glick, 2010; Patrick, 2010, Bell, 2011 & Appathurai, 2012) as incidences, causes and consequences of divorce among married couples. Much studies have not been carried out on the incidence, causes and consequences of divorce among married couples in public service of Enugu State. The problem of this study posed as a question is: what factors are associated with divorce among couples in Enugu State public service?

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed to guide the study.

1. To what extent are socio-economic factors associated with divorce among married public servants?
2. To what extent is extended family relatives associated with divorce among couples?
3. To what extent are religious factors associated with divorce among couples?

Method

This study adopted a survey research design. The study was designed to ascertain the factors associated with divorce among couples in public service of Enugu State. This design is considered the most appropriate for a study of this nature because according to Nwogu (1991), descriptive survey research design are those studies which aim at collecting data on, and describing in a systematic manner, the characteristics, features or facts about a given population. This study was aimed at identifying and describing the factors associated with divorce among couples in public service of Enugu State. The population of the study consisted of 905 registered divorced couples in all the seventeen (17) local government areas of Enugu State. A sample of 300 divorced couples were drawn and used for the study. The sample was drawn through multi-stage random sampling technique. The first stage involved the researcher randomly selecting 10 out of

the 17 local government areas. The next stage involved randomly selecting 30 cases of divorce from each social welfare centers in each of the ten local government areas.

For the purpose of data collection, the researcher developed and administered a self-constructed rating scale type of questionnaire called Factors associated with Divorce among Couples Instrument (FAWDACI) to divorced couples serving in public services in Enugu State. The FAWDACI has one section only and was a four-point rating scale, namely; Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (DA), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was face validated by three experts in guidance and family counseling and three experts in measurement and evaluating of the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria Nsukka and Godfrey Okoye Udi Local Government Area. Their responses were analyzed with Spearmans' Rank order correlation co-efficient so as to ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument. The Udi local government area did not form part of the main study. The reliability of the instrument yielded 0.78 and any item that attracts a mean response of 2.5 and above was accepted, while those with main response below 2.5 was rejected as a factor associated with divorce. The FAWDACI was administered to the randomly sampled 300 families that fall within the sample and collected from them by the researcher directly by hand. The administration and collection of the instrument provided data analysis. The analysis of data was done using mean in answering the research questions while t-test statistic was used in testing the hypotheses.

Results

Research question one was answered using data in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation (S.D.) on the Extent to which Socio-Economic Factors are Associated with Divorce.

S/ N	Items	Frequency and table score responses for each unit of response					Mean Score	Rmks.
		SD	DA	AG	SA	Total		
1	Delay in the payment of salaries to public servants makes them debtors, the outcome of which is marital conflict.	-	-	202 (606)	98 (606)	998	3.33	Very high
2	Poor working condition results in low placement among public servants to the extent that their families are badly affected.	-	-	149 (447)	151 (604)	1051	3.5	Very high
3	High economic position creates insecurity in homes which in turn generate crises in families.	14 (14)	51 (102)	112 (336)	123 (492)	944	3.15	High
4	Meager salaries create hardship in families and lead to marital breakage.	-	-	163 (489)	137 (548)	1037	3.46	Very high
5	Poor feeding, clothing and accommodation patterns in the homes make stable marital life difficult for public servants.	-	-	177 (531)	123 (492)	1023	3.41	Very high
6	Over concentration of daily hours in work places	-	-	114 (456)	114 (456)	1044	3.48	Very high

leaves the family without care and love. This creates conflicts in marriages.

Table 1 revealed the responses of the spouses on the socio-economic status among married couples in Enugu State public service. The mean responses of the respondents on the item 1 to 6 are all above the criterion cut-off point of 2.5. All the items were above 3 which has mean score of 3.15 and was remarkably 'high'.

Table 2: The Extent to which Extended Family Relatives are Associated with Divorce.

S/N	Items	Frequency and table score responses for each unit of response					Mean Score	Rmks.
		SD	DA	AG	SA	Total		
1	Too much demands and even expectations by parents-in-law are ready sources of worry and economic hardship for couples.	-	8 (16)	162 (486)	130 (520)	1 022	3.41	Very high
2	Undue instruction by other family members on the domestic affairs of the couples creates room for conflicts between couples.	-	-	158 (474)	142 (568)	104 2	3.37	Very high
3	Pressures from parent-in-law create barriers for the enthronement of marital peace and harmony.	-	-	151 (453)	149 (596)	104 9	3.5	Very high
4	Too much visits by brothers and sisters-in-law even without invitation and/or notice creates problems in marriage.	-	-	205 (615)	95 (350)	995	3.32	Very high

The data in Table 2 shows that there is a very high relationship between extended family relatives and incidences of divorce among couples in public service of Enugu State. The mean responses of the respondents on the four items in the table range from 3.32 to 3.5, which were far above the cut-off point of 2.5.

Table 3: Mean Responses on the Extent to which Religious Factor Contribute to Divorce.

S/N	Items	Frequency and table score responses for each unit of response				Mean Score	Rmks.
		SD	DA	AG	SA		
1	Some religious permit polygamy which in itself is a factor of instability.	-	-	198 (584)	102 (408)	3.31	Very high
2	Inter-faith marriages result in ideological conflicts between couples.	-	3 (6)	91 (273)	206 (824)	3.68	Very high
3	Some religious groups like the African traditional religion, permit divorce for unhappy marriages.	-	-	212 (236)	88 (352)	3.29	Very high

Table 3 revealed the mean responses of the respondents on each of the three units (items 1 to 3) regarding the extent to which religious factors are associated with divorce was very high. In other words, the table indicates that the opinion of the respondents on the three items were exactly or nearly the same as the items were remarked 'very high' as the mean scores of the items were far above 2.5 cut-off point.

Discussion of Results

Based on the findings, it is clear that a high incidence of socio-economic factors, religious factors and extended family relatives were found to be associated with divorce. The mean responses of the spouses concerning the extent to which socio-economic factors are associated with divorce were very high and ranged from 3.15 to 3.5 far above the cut-off point of 2.5. Moreso, the mean responses of the spouses on the extent to which extended family relatives are associated with divorce were very high too and ranged from 3.32 to 3.5. The mean responses of the spouses on the extent to which religious factors are associated with divorce were equally very high and ranged from 3.29 to 3.68. This finding is consistent with earlier reports (Glick, 2010; Nye, 2011; & Bell, 2011) that aspects of socio-economic factors contributes to marriage disfunction. Moreso, relationship between divorce and extended family relatives was found to be very high. This finding is consistent with the earlier study of Nwobodo (1997) who reported that the extent to which extended family relatives are associated with divorce is very high. The mean responses of the spouses over the extent to which religious factors are associated with divorce was found to be very high. This report is consistent with earlier report of Nye (2011) who revealed that religious factor is a serious factor responsible for family disunity.

Conclusion

The following conclusions were made based on findings of the study. The findings provided empirical evidence that factors such as socio-economic, extended family relatives and religion are associated with divorce among couples in public service of Enugu State. Consequently, this situation suggests the establishment of counselling unit in each public service establishment to function as in-service training resource for all civil servants in the State.

Recommendations

Recommendations are made based on the findings as follows:

1. Enugu State government should improve the working conditions of her workers through regular payment of worker's salaries and allowances.
2. Various religious denominations should institute serious marriage counselling programmes for people intending to get married, especially for those marriages cutting across religious boundaries.
3. Enugu State media houses should embark on public enlightenment campaign on what is and what is not expected from extended family relatives over the marriage of their sons and daughters.
4. Guidance counselling should consider socio-economic status, religious and estimated family factor while handling cases of divorce.

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