

CHALLENGES OF DIVORCE AS PERCEIVED BY MARRIED ADULTS IN IJUMU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, KOGI STATE: AN AGENDA FOR VALUE RE-ORIENTATION

Josephine S. AINA, PhD

*Department of Educational Foundations,
Faculty of Education,
National Open University of Nigeria.
+234(0)8036093532
jaina@noun.edu.ng*

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Ehindero E. RONKE

*Department of Educational Management and Counselling
Al-hikmah University, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.
ronkeehindero@gmail.com
07038746113*

Abstract

Divorce is defined as the final dissolution of a marriage through formal legal procedures. In modern society, divorce is on the rise as a method of starting a family. This study looked on married adults' perceptions of the difficulties associated with divorce in Ijumu L.G.A., Kogi State. The impact of age and gender was also investigated in this study. To direct the study's activities, a single research topic was posed, and two related hypotheses were developed and put to the test. A descriptive survey strategy was used in this investigation. Through simple random selection, 200 married individuals in Kogi State's Ijumu Local Government Area were chosen as responders. The participants answered the "Challenges of Divorce Questionnaire (CDQ)," a questionnaire created by the researcher. The test-retest reliability of the instrument was 0.75. The collected data was examined using descriptive and inferential statistics. The t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical techniques were used to evaluate the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance, with percentages representing the demographic data. According to the data, married people in Ijumu LGA rated social isolation, loneliness, and constant concern as the three most challenging issues after divorce. Married persons in Kogi State's Ijumu Local Government Area saw divorcees' hardships significantly differently depending on their age. The following recommendations were made based on the study's findings: To help divorcees avoid loneliness and its negative consequences, individuals close to them, such as relatives and friends, should offer them the proper support. Counsellors should provide divorcees with appropriate coping mechanisms, such as advice on enhancing family ties, developing communication skills, and maintaining a healthy atmosphere, to help them deal with the difficulties of anxiety and psychological disturbance. In addition to teaching engaged and married couples about potential causes of separation or divorce, marriage counsellors should equip them with social life and communication strategies that can help prevent divorce. Parents or married adults should collaborate to strengthen their marriage.

Keywords; Challenges, Divorce, Perceived, Married, Adults, Value Re-orientation.

Background to the Study

The family is the most important unit of social organisation in a society. Marriage and the family are the two most important institutions in any community since they are seen as the cornerstones of society. Marriage has always been permitted in Nigeria as long as men and women agree to it. For the majority of Nigerians, however, marriage is a sacred connection rather than just an agreement. It is customary to think of a couple's commitment to matrimony as lasting until death parts them. This indicates that marriage was traditionally viewed as a lifetime commitment that provided security against shifting social norms.

The roles and obligations of the marriage were defined by social standards, and it included a set of rules and checks within this framework. The sanctity associated with marriage in Nigeria sets it apart from marriages in other nations, since it was seen as a lifelong relationship and possessing a divine quality (Yusuf, 2020).

It is recognised that marriage is an organisation that brings people into the family. It is characterised as a culturally endorsed association between a man and a woman (Esere, 2015). This association is gotten up in a position to support a man and a woman getting along fully intent on beginning a family, getting married, and having children. One of the main life altering situations that affects the influencing the actual status as well as mind of an individual (Mazumdar, 2011).

When the aforementioned ethics are missing, unfriendly marriage conditions or conjugal flimsiness happen. As indicated by Corridor and Hoffin (2005), this peculiarity can manifest in various ways of behaving, like struggle, viciousness, questioning, persistent disagreements, disregard, and conjugal discontent. They noticed that these conditions could result in a breakup, divorce, or "conjugal crumbling." While the ideal marriage ought to be a cheerful foundation to which all forthcoming couples aspire, a few couples quickly realise that the deception that plagued their pursuing or pre-marriage relationship vanishes, forcing them to confront the reality of life.

In addition to other things, these life realities could be the recognition of contrariness or the information that reality doesn't necessarily in every case match one's assumptions.

Mgbodile (2011) noted that needing an unending wedding trip while going into marriage resembles to a young person dreaming of an interminable inventory of chocolate cream. Divorce might happen when the aforementioned negative conditions emerge. Divorce is the symbol of the dissolution of the marriage. It represents a significant break from the shared life that spouses once enjoyed when they separate from one another. In its formal and accurate definition, divorce means that the marriage has ended completely, returning the divorced parties to their pre-divorce state of being free to find other partners. Divorce is a legal document that certifies the termination of the hopes that two individuals had for one another.

Divorce can be interpreted in a variety of ways, including separation, desertion, and annulment. Separation can be seen as a legally recognised decision to live apart without getting divorced, a temporary measure to ease the immediate conflict, an informal first step towards divorce, or any combination of these. Losing consistent marital companionship when a couple separates has an adverse effect on their happiness, safety, and well-being.

Desertion is the act of one spouse willfully abandoning the other spouse and children to live alone in the family home. Numerous academics' studies have shown that deserters are frequently husbands from poorer socioeconomic homes. Because desertion is a shirking of marital responsibilities, it is difficult to determine its entire scope. Desertion has many of the same repercussions as divorce because it can lead to the irreversible dissolution of the family. On the other hand, desertion poses a few unique challenges. The wife and children frequently experience far worse emotional suffering than in a divorce.

A court decision that declares a marriage void because of specific legal flaws, such as coercion, fraud, unwillingness to consummate the union, age concerns, bigamy, and so on, is known as an annulment. An annulment is a judicial proceeding that declares a marriage void on the grounds that it never existed legally and shouldn't have happened, according to Nimkoff (2011). When a couple separates, law as living in different households acknowledges them, but they are not allowed to get married again until they achieve marital status. Nullity is the legal admission that a marriage was never truly lawful, whereas desertion is the voluntary separation of one spouse from the other without the other's agreement.

For Yusuf (2020), a divorce is the official dissolution of a marriage. Divorce, according to Mirror (2010), is the total breakdown of a marriage by legal procedures. Similar to how a wedding ceremony signifies the formal start of a marriage, a divorce is the sole event that officially ends one. Numerous factors can lead to divorce. According to Arowolo (2014), the Nigerian civil war, other forces pushing for women's liberation, and increased financial pressure on marriage and the family as a result of couples keeping separate finances and pursuing other interests have all contributed to an increase in divorce rates in Nigeria compared to pre-colonial times. This state of affairs can also be ascribed to the waning of detrimental societal sanctions in conjunction with a relaxation of the financial and legal constraints linked to divorce.

Divorcees' careless actions frequently cause other families to fall apart. A lady who has recently gone through a divorce could try to entice a man who is happy and faithful in his marriage, and vice versa. Divorcees frequently suffer from a loss of respect and recognition, becoming the target of rumours and jeers in the neighbourhood. Furthermore, divorce places unwelcome financial strain on both parties. This is especially true in cases of litigation.

Divorce strains relationships and breeds animosity between individuals and groups. Children of divorcees are likely to receive inadequate care from both parents, which could breed misfits in society. The divorcing couple may use their money to hire lawyers, buy witnesses, or influence the police.

Obiadi (2011) asserts that divorce is a social evil in and of itself, having negative repercussions on the couples involved, their children, and the community at large. Divorce is one facet of marital organisation that, among other things, hinders the prospects for the offspring of such a separation in life (Dike, 2020). These families typically have some children who are a nuisance to the community. Children are the biggest victims of a strained marriage, according to Mgbodile (2011).

Many studies on warnings suggest that the experience of a divorce or separation is more upsetting for the partner who is less psychologically prepared for it. Those who were abandoned in a marriage without receiving any kind of advance notice that a separation may occur unless they made changes fall into this category (Okeke, Nwoye & Kadiri, 2020). Regarding the length of marriage aspect, a divorce that occurs within a short period of time—for example, within one or two years—may not be as traumatic as one that occurs after a long period of marriage (Rais, 2021). This is mostly because attachments are typically die-hard once they have established.

Research by Rais also demonstrates that the man or woman who ends a marriage has a greater benefit than the so-called left in terms of swiftly surviving the divorce problem. The individual who is being forced into a divorce is referred to as the "left" in this context. Since the aforementioned studies by Weiss (2012) and Okeke (2020) have not been subjected to empirical testing, they are merely conjectures that must be confirmed in our own environment. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, none of the previously named researchers has decided that it is appropriate to do research on the current study.

Therefore, the researcher intends to fill the gap left behind by the earlier researchers by investigating the challenges of divorce as perceived by married adults in Ijumu Local Government of Kogi State, It is in light of this gap that the current study has been initiated.

Statement of the Problem

Over the past few decades, divorce rates have risen in Western nations and beyond; these developments are seen as important drivers of family transformation. However, these changes have been unequal and have happened in different nations at different times. Moreover, in many of these countries, the divorce rate has stabilised or even declined in recent years. Divorce is now a genuine possibility that prospective spouses must face when getting married, and it has been ingrained in the family unit. Divorce can nevertheless bring significant anguish and disruption to the individuals and children who experience it, even though it is less stigmatised than in the past. Divorce is a possibility, and being around those who have gone through it can influence people's experiences and behaviours (Okeke et al, 2020).

Mirror (2010) and Ikwuji (2012) According to Walker (2012), there seems to be a rise in marriage dissolution and a growing sense of stress among divorcees, their children, and the community. According to Weiss (2012), divorcees face a variety of challenges due to their unique personal circumstances and adjustment styles, which appears to cause them and society at large

immense suffering. Additionally, the researcher conducted a study on marital characteristics that may contribute to divorce. He learned about many personal aspects of marriage, such as the nature of the connection after marriage, the dynamics of the leaver and the left, the length of the marriage, the elements of forewarning, and the possibilities of forming a new relationship.

Research Question

One research question was raised to guide the conduct of the study: What are the challenges of divorce as perceived by married adults in Ijumu Local Government of Kogi State?

Research Hypotheses

In line with the research questions, the following hypotheses were tested in this study:

1. Married adults in Ijumu Local Government of Kogi State consider divorce challenges similarly, regardless of gender.
2. There is no substantial difference in the challenges of divorce as seen by married people in Ijumu Local Government of Kogi State based on age.

Literature Review

The topic of marriage was discussed at the outset of this study's literature review. Given the lack of a universally recognised definition, various writers have provided distinct definitions of marriage depending on their individual viewpoints and sexual orientation. All of these definitions, however, shared the broad idea that marriage is only possible between two or more people, regardless of gender or other social standing. For example, according to writers such as Rais (2021), marriage is the condition of being joined as husband and wife to someone of the other sex with the intention of creating a family through procreation and affection.

Gbenda and Agusiobo, Agukwe-Oluoma (2023) described marriage as a divine circumstance in which a husband and wife should harmoniously integrate into one "flesh" and be a particular relationship for the rest of their lives. The researcher then discussed the idea of divorce, its different forms, its reasons, its difficulties, its coping mechanisms, and the numerous definitions of divorce provided by different writers. Divorce, according to one statement, is the total breakup of a marriage by legal procedures.

According to Obi (2012), divorcees appear to have comparable adjustment issues to those in other Federation states. These divorcees follow distinct adjustment methods in an attempt to establish a compromise in their new surroundings. Different divorcees adjust to their new circumstances differently depending on a variety of individual traits. These features include the length of the marriage, the degree of pre-divorce notice given, the roles of the initiator and the recipient during the divorce, the potential for forming new relationships, the type of interactions that occur after the divorce, especially in cases where children are involved, and the impact of educational attainment.

Arowolo (2014) conducted a study on the divorce rate as reported by married adults in the state of Anambra. The study discovered that there is a higher divorce rate in Nigeria today than there was before colonisation. The report also identifies a number of factors that contribute to the pressure on marriage and family structures. These include the effects of the Nigerian civil war, the increased desire for financial gain that leads to couples managing their finances separately, and elements that support women's emancipation. The lessening of the detrimental social effects and the removal of the financial and legal obstacles related to divorce also play a big part.

Methodology

For this study, a descriptive survey research design was used to collect pertinent data. 2,201 married adults in Kogi State's Ijumu Local Government make up the study's population. (National Population Commission, 2006), whereas 200 married adults who were purposefully chosen to participate in the study from eight communities in Kogi state's Ijumu Local Government Area make up the targeted population. The proportionate and stratified sampling technique was employed in the process of choosing the study's sample. In the first stage, 25 married adults from each of the eight communities in Kogi State's Ijumu Local Government were chosen using the purposive sample method. The participants were chosen from a variety of homes and places of worship. The respondents were categorised according to age and gender using the stratified sample approach as well.

A study questionnaire named the "Challenges and Coping Strategies Questionnaire" (CCSQ) was modified based on Ibrahim's (2018) work. To better serve the goals of this investigation, the researcher renamed the instrument the "Challenges of Divorce Questionnaire" (CDQ). portions A and B comprise the two portions of the instrument. Age and gender were the two variables that made up the demographic data, or personal information, of the respondents, which is covered in Section A. Ten topics in Section B discuss divorce-related difficulties (0.75).

The format of each segment was used to determine the score for the questionnaire items. Frequency and percentage were used to assess and do statistical analysis on Section 'A'. On the other hand, Section B has ten items about the difficulties of divorce were rated on a four-point. However, the four-point Likert Type grading was based on average mean ratings in order to address the study's research goals. The instrument, for example, has a range of 1 to 4 (1, 2, 3, 4). The mean value is equal to $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 2.5$. Thus, the average mean score is 2.5. Items with scores less than 2.5 were regarded by married adults as the least challenging aspects of divorce, and any mean score above 2.5 was regarded as the greatest obstacles of divorce. Frequency and percentage were utilised in the demographic data section analysis, as suitable statistical analysis was applied to the study's data collection. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) was utilised to test hypothesis 1, and the t-test was utilised to test hypothesis 2, both at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

During instrument administration, 200 questionnaire forms were distributed, but only 196 were valid for data analysis. Demographics of Respondents

Table 1 displays the demographic data of the respondents using percentage-based descriptive statistics:

Table 1: Distributions of Respondents’ Demographic Characteristics

N	Variables		Frequency	Percentage %
1.	Gender	Male	83	42.3
		Female	113	57.7
		Total	196	100.0
2.	Age	18-28 years	37	18.9
		29-39 years	33	16.8
		40-50 years	72	36.7
		51-60 year	54	27.6
		Total	196	100

The respondents' demographic data is shown in Table 1. According to the table, 113 (57.7%) and 83 (42.3%) of the 196 respondents who took part in the survey were female. Age-wise, 37 (18.9%) of the respondents were between the ages of 18 and 28, 33 (16.8%) were between the ages of 29 and 39, 72 (36.7%) were between the ages of 40 and 50, and 54 (27.6%) were between the ages of 51 and 60.

Research Question 1: What are the challenges of divorce as perceived by married adult in Ijumu Local Government Area?

Table 2: Mean and rank order of respondents’ responses on challenges of divorce

S/N	As far as I am concerned, divorcee experience the following challenges:	Mean	Rank
1	loneliness	3.47	1 st
7	persistent worry and disturbed	3.47	1 st
8	socially isolated	3.47	1 st
6	emotional health problem	3.46	4 th
4	financial burden	3.37	5 th
2	difficulty in instilling discipline in children	3.37	5 th
1	fatigue and stress	3.32	7 th
9	consequence ill health	3.30	8 th
3	lack of attachment to their children	3.29	9 th
5	are often sexually harassed	3.04	10 th

According to Table 2, seven of the ten (10) items had means scores higher than the average mean value of 2.50%, which serves as the standard for identifying the major difficulties associated with divorce. Nevertheless, items 3, 7, and 8 were placed first, and their respective mean values of 3.47, 3.47, and 3.47 preceded the others. Married adults in Ijumu LGA ranked loneliness, ongoing anxiety, disruption, and social isolation as the biggest divorce-related issues.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is no substantial difference in the challenges of divorce as seen by married people in Ijumu Local Government of Kogi State based on age.

Table 3: Mean, SD and t-test Result Showing Difference in Respondents’ Perception of Challenges of Divorce Based on Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t	Crit. t	p-value
Male	83	59.82	5.79	194	2.31*	1.96	0.022
Female	113	61.80	6.00				

* Sig. at $p < 0.05$

Table 4 demonstrates that the computed t-value of 2.31 for a degree of freedom (df) of 194 is higher than the crucial t-value of 1.96, and the accompanying p-value of 0.022 is less significant at the 0.05 level. The hypothesis was rejected because this suggests that married people in Kogi State's Ijumu Local Government Area perceive divorce challenges differently based on their gender. As a result, the respondents believe that gender influences the difficulties associated with divorce.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the challenges of divorce as perceived by married adults in Ijumu Local Government Area, Kogi State based on age.

Table 4: ANOVA Result Showing Difference in Respondents' Perception of Challenges of Divorce Based on Age

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	Cal. F	Crit. F	p-value
Between group	123.237	3	41.079	1.14	2.60	0.331
Within group	6864.437	192	35.752			
Total	6987.637	195				

Table 4 shows that the related p-value of 0.331 is less than the 0.05 level of significance and the assessed F-value of 1.14 is not precisely the essential F-value of 2.60 for degrees of freedom (df) of 3 and 192. Since the data demonstrated that married individuals in Kogi State's Ijumu Local Government Area, regardless of age, had similar views on divorce concerns. As a result, age has no discernible influence on respondents' perceptions of divorce-related difficulties.

Discussion

The study's conclusions showed that married adults in Ijumu LGA ranked loneliness, ongoing anxiety, being disturbed and social isolation as the top four issues faced by divorcees. According to this research, getting divorced after a long marriage is one of the painful life events that can have serious repercussions. Because the absent partner may have been their closest friend and primary source of joy and satisfaction, the divorcee would likely feel alone. When this occurs, the single parent may feel empty and uneasy sharing their secrets with a stranger, perhaps even their children.

Along these lines, concern would surface and the person in question would experience discomfort. In order to avoid fulfilling their responsibilities, society may frequently overlook or neglect lone parents (especially if the individual in question is a woman). The results of this study are consistent with those of Mayer (2009), who listed social isolation, anxiety, and loneliness among the difficulties faced by single parents. This research implies that divorcees struggle with a variety of alleged warped value systems, such as lying, neglecting to communicate, cheating, having conflicting priorities, and not resolving conflicts in a positive manner. Healthy partnerships frequently flourish on mutual respect, trust, open communication, and shared ideals, claim Aina and Idris (2021).

According to the first hypothesis, married people in Kogi State's Ijumu Local Government Area saw a considerable difference in the difficulties associated with divorce depending on their gender. This indicates that respondents' perceptions of the difficulties and coping mechanisms associated with divorce varied across men and women. This result conflicts with that of Hendricks (2011), who found no discernible differences in the divorce-related issues that married people reported. This research suggests that women who have divorced, particularly those who are jobless, may experience greater hardship than men who have ended their relationship.

According to hypothesis two, married people in Kogi State's Ijumu Local Government Area did not significantly differ in their perceptions of the difficulties associated with divorce based on their age. This indicates that married individuals' perceptions of the difficulties and coping mechanisms associated with divorce are unaffected by age differences. This result supports the findings of Hendricks (2011), who found that there is no discernible age-based variation in the divorce-related issues that married people report. This research suggests that divorcees are more likely to feel anxious and lonely.

Conclusion

The findings of the study indicated loneliness, persistent worry and social isolation as the topmost challenges of divorce as perceived by married adults in Ijumu LGA. Gender is a critical factor in the challenges by divorcee as perceived by married adults in Ijumu Local Government Area, Kogi State.

Recommendations

The study's findings led to the following recommendations:

1. People around divorcee (such as family and friends) should provide appropriate support for divorcee in order to help prevent against loneliness and its accompanying consequences.
2. Marriage counsellors should educate intending and married couples on factors that could lead to separation or divorce or which could make them become single parents and provide them with effective communication and social life skills they can employ to guide against divorce.
3. Intending couples can also be encouraged to engage in healthy and constructive relationships which are built on trust, shared values, open communication and mutual respect.
4. Married adults or parents should work together to help their marriage stable and functional so that they can be able to avoid becoming a divorcee, as well as its accompanying consequences.

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