

Social indicators and effects of marriage divorce in African societies

Love Obiani Arugu

Department of Political Science and Strategic Studies
Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study involves a theoretical exposition of social indicators and effect of marriage divorce in African societies. In traditional African society, marriage divorce was seldom permitted and the rate of divorce was generally very low. But today, marriage divorce is a growing social ill in our societies. This is due to several factors, which include- childlessness, adultery, quarrelling, alcoholism, socialization and technological advancement, financial difficulties, immaturity, mixed marriage, adverse influence of in-laws, religious affiliation, and educational attainment. It results in crisis for family members and causes loss of an intimate relationship that also brought security and support. It also signifies a loss of hopes and dreams as well as feeling of failure. In view of the above discussions, it is recommended that couples should avoid and circumvent all the factors responsible for marriage divorce in order to have a happy and loving family.

Introduction

Marriage is an institution ordained by God and it has a special significance in our society. Obi (1990) defined marriage as a union between a man and a woman that lasts the duration of the man's life and the woman's life, as well as a social structure that promotes an association and agreement between two families. In other words, marriage is predicated on the mutual consent of a man and a woman to live together as husband and wife. Ordinarily, an ideal marriage will remain united, undivided, and unbroken. This is the plan written by the mind of the creator when He gave Eve to Adam as his permanent partner in the Garden of Eden. Therefore all efforts must be made to encourage couples to stay together or get back together, even when they have separated. It is therefore imperative that marriage be contracted for life or for an indefinite period. In spite of the significance of marriage, every society is faced with situations in which marriage fails and the couples cannot tolerate living together. The aftermath of this is divorce. According to Grath (2001), divorce is a legal or customary decree that a marriage is dissolved in other words, divorce is a permanent separation of married people as a result of unexpected marriage outcome. Mbiti (2007:145) argue that;

Divorce is a delicate accident in marital relationships. What constitutes a divorce must be viewed against the fact that marriage is a process. In many societies that process is complete only when the first child is born, or when all the marriage presents have been paid or even when one's first children are married. Once the full contract of marriage has been executed, it is extremely hard to dissolve it.

In Nigeria as well as other parts of the globe, many divorced people remarry and about half of those who do are already parents. This results in the creation of "blended families" also called "stepfamilies". For instance, in 1992, over 11% of all American children were living with

one biological parent and one step parent. Estimates are that a fourth of American children will live with a step parent before reaching the age of sixteen (Cherlin and Furistanbery, 2000). In the same vein, Nigeria in recent years has witnessed a high rate of divorce as a result of urbanization and industrialization (Adegoke, 2010). The periods triggered to a monetary industrial economy. Thus, the extended family that used to resolve conflicts or misunderstanding between couples was no longer function effectively like in the past. The extended family structure eventually broke-up in the process; and there was a shift towards the nuclear family system characterized by less involvement of members in the resolution of marital conflicts.

It can be argued that, perhaps the most important factor in the increase in divorce throughout the twentieth century has been the greater social acceptance of divorce. In particular, this increased tolerance has resulted from relaxation of negative attitudes toward divorce among various religious denominations. Although, divorce is still seen as unfortunate, it is no longer treated as sin by most religious leaders (Gertel, 1997). Many states including Nigeria have adopted more liberal divorce laws in the last two decades. Divorce has become a more practical option in newly formed families, since they now tend to have fewer children than in the past. Adegoke (2010) observed that the search for employment by family members in the labour market or their inability to find work can be considered as a disruptive force in maintaining marital stability. More so, a general increase in family income coupled with the availability of free legal aid for some poor people, has meant that more couples can afford the traditionally high legal costs of divorce proceedings. It is also believed that, as society provides greater opportunities for women, more and more wives are becoming less dependent on husbands economically and emotionally. They feel more able to leave on their own if the marriage seems hopeless.

Marriage Divorce will continue to be on the increase in Nigeria if its causes and effects are not properly identified and controlled. It is on this premise that this study is consummated.

Literature Review

In the past decades, the rate of divorce in Nigeria was very minimal. Husbands and wives knew that marriage was contracted to keep the family genealogy going. Moreover, both husband and wife knew their roles in the family. More importantly, in Nigeria, marriage was never regarded as an individual affair. The family members had much influence on what went on in the family. However, these trends changed immediately after the Nigerian-Biafra war, when people became increasingly individualistic and took the laws into their own hands. This was the time that family values started eroding, which eventually resulted in an increase of divorce in the contemporary society.

Husband and wives in the early periods knew that marriage was sacred, indissoluble, and stable. Christ said, "What God has joined together, let no one separate" (Matthew 19:6). Oforchukwu (2000) observed that no couples have the right to discontinue the Christian relationship. During the nuptial exchange of vows, couples promise each other to remain in marriage for better or worse, until death do them apart. In the Igbo traditional society, marriage used to be for life. Today, things have changed, and marriage, an institution that used to be stable, is no longer steady. Oforchukwu (2000) observed that married partners are often faced with problems that might dissolve their relationship. He urged couples to be careful when this became the situation in partners' relationship. Unfortunately, life has changed since the end of Nigerian-Biafra War in 1970. These changes are obvious in social, educational, political, religious, and economic aspects of Igbo existence. Our people who travel abroad have seriously

been influenced by cross-culturalization, which has affected the attitudes of our people with regard to marriage and divorce.

Causes of Marriage Divorce in African

There are several factors responsible for marriage divorce in Africa and in the globe generally. A review of extant literature revealed the following factors.

Childlessness- In Africa culture, any marriage that is not blessed with children is not yet considered to have achieved its aim (Oforchukwu 2000). This was also the case in the First Book of Samuel, where Hannah was taunted for being childless. This book explains, her rival would taunt her to annoy her because Yahweh had made her barren. And this went on year after year, every time they went to the temple of Yahweh she used to taunt her. And so Hannah wept and would not eat' (1 Sam. 1:6-7). This passage suggested the real mood of any woman who is not blessed with children in any society. Hannah, like any other childless woman, is always in a sad mood. The Jews, as well as Nigerians (Africans) value children in any wedlock. This is why any man or woman who has no child is not yet considered to be a fulfilling wife or husband.

Infertility in marriage is considered something bad in marriage, because without children, the name of the family will disappear like the smoke of fire. Marriage is therefore contracted in order to keep the family line going, arguing the importance of procreation in marriage, Mbiti (2007:28)

therefore it is a duty, religious and ontological for everyone to get married and if a man has no children or only daughters he finds another wife so that through her, children may be born who would survive him and keep him on personal immortality. Procreation is the absolute way of insuring that a person is not cut off from personal immortality.

The Nigeria people recognize marriage as achieving its primary purpose only in the production of offspring. It is unfortunate that it is the woman who is blamed for childlessness. As a result, the wife is scorned, rejected, and unloved by some members of the family. (Gen. 4-5) reported that Sarai, the childless wife of Abraham, experienced dejection in her marriage simply because she was barren. Mbiti (2007:107) stated that-

Marriage is not fully recognized or consummated until the wife has given birth. First pregnancy becomes, therefore the final seal of marriage, the sign of complete integration of the woman into her husband's family and kingship circle. Unhappy is the woman who failed to get children for, whatever qualities she might possess, her failure to bear children is worse than committing genocide: she has become the dead end of human life, not only for the genealogical time but also for herself.

Childlessness is unacceptable to a society that values children. It is presumed that when the partners in a marriage die off childless, there will be nobody to remember them. Their line of genealogy will disappear. Mbiti (2007) supported this argument by saying that when she (the woman) dies, "there will be nobody of her own immediate blood to remember her, to keep her in the state of personal immortality, she will simply be forgotten." This shows that any marriage that has been blessed with children has special place in our society. Marriage is considered to have achieved its role in Igbo society only when it is productive and fruitful. Any marriage that is not fruitful in the physical sense in Igbo society has failed both society and the couples.

Adultery- In any society (whether early or modern), adultery represents a vexing problem in marriages. Adultery is defined by moral theologians as the "act of sexual intercourse between a married man and a woman not his wife or between a married woman and a man not her husband (Miller 1991). One of the essential features of adultery is that one of the parties involved must be married. However, when both adulterers are married, the guilt becomes compounded. Adultery is considered a serious crime in Nigerian society. It is such a serious

crime that even the Mosaic Law forbids it. The Law also prescribes penalties against those committing adultery. In the covenant, he made with the Israelites; Yahweh included adultery among the sins that must be avoided. The Book of Exodus stated that followers of God must not commit adultery.

Couples must avoid committing the sin of adultery. It is a sad truth that some families have failed due to adultery. Adultery represents a sin against God, justice, man, and nature. In short, the adulterer has fooled himself or herself. The victim of this injustice is the innocent member of the couple, whose marital rights have been violated by the other party. Couples must make efforts to be faithful to one another. This will then help them to consolidate their relationship. Kennedy (1994) believed that the present conditions of our society offer little encouragement for faithful couples. He argued that the present world is a changing society. According to Kennedy (1994) recently, on the radio and television, and in articles and books, "there is increasing emphasis on the enticing aspects of infidelity. Nollywood, the most watched movie industry in Africa has also contributed to this problem. Even in some cases, infidelity is praised and rewarded. This attitude weakens and discourages an honest spouse who wants to be faithful to his or her commitments. Presently, the non-hero, the adulterer, we have found reason to praise them all of late." It is not easy for one to remain faithful to one's spouse when the world is applauding faithless spouses.

As a result, adultery may lead to divorce of a valid marriage among Nigerian Christians when the couples do not accept the situation. In Christianity, it is clearly stated that if one is guilty of adultery, the other party has the right to a permanent separation. The innocent spouse is not obliged to readmit the adulterous spouse to the community of married life. All the same, Christianity teaches that it will benefit the innocent partner to forgive the guilty and adulterous partner when he or she repents, on the ground for keeping the family intact.

Quarrelling- In African societies, some couples have failed to achieve the ideal marriage, meaning that some couples do not live in harmony with one another. Such couples need to be pitied, because they are missing the blessings and joys of married couples. Some couples may also conflict with one another, such that it does not encourage good relationship in the family. Quarrels, strife, rifts, and disharmony are incompatible with peace and may lead to friction between husband and wife. Quarrelling is unhealthy in a relationship and poses a big problem for married life. At times, it is natural for couples to have misunderstandings, but the couple should not allow these disputes to be prolonged. In family life, incompatibility, hot temper, poverty, or negligence may be the root cause of quarrels. Further, many husbands and wives might engage in the misguided pursuit of wealth. Money is a motivating force in our society. It has incredible power. Couples must be careful with money; otherwise, money will hold the sole power to either unify or divide the couple. Money may arouse contempt in the family.

No one can deny the influence that money has a command in the society. Couples should be warned against the greedy pursuit of money. Of course, money can be a faithful servant for partners who are wise, but can be the opposite for those who are selfish and foolish. Peterson (1993) argued that money, like lire, can be a faithful servant but a tyrannical master. According to Peterson, we must either master our money or be forever intimidated and dominated by it in such a way that making peace with money is not easy.

Alcoholism- Some husbands, as well as wives, are addicts to alcohol. They expend much of their time, resources and energy on drink. They spend less time to train and direct their children. As a result, husbands leave their domestic affairs to their wives or vice versa who have little or no money for this purpose. Husbands and wives should guard against this, because

excessive drink is detrimental to the maintenance of the family. Alcohol has ruined some homes in African families (Adegoke, 2010).

An alcoholic husband, for example, can hardly make a reasonable and constructive decision regarding the running of his family. He is only interested in spending his money on drink. The effects of alcohol are harmful. When a man gets drunk, he neglects the affairs of his house. He will no longer support his family as he ought, and he may even beat his wife. In the face of alcohol abuse, the family falls into danger. Something has to be done in such situations; otherwise, alcohol may lead to marriage disintegration.

Socialization and Technological Advancement- Modern society is dynamic. Most families in Africa are highly influenced by social activities, mass communication techniques, and community friends (Obi, 1990). These factors could pose dangers on some homes. The home should protect its members against one undue influence of friends and neighbors. Couples should not allow anyone who does not belong to the family circle to exert excessive influence on the family, or feel the right to influence family affairs, or be too familiar with the family. Some friends may be wolves in sheep's clothing; they may be pretending to be friends but in actual fact, they have some ulterior motives. At times, familiarity breeds contempt. When there is too much familiarity between a spouse and a friend, the friend may become a threat to family solidarity. The female children may be a temptation to a male family friend. Further, prolonged contact in an atmosphere that stimulates the senses may become dangerous for the husband or the wife. In most cases, before married couples realize what is going on, it has become too late. Couples are advised to avoid any rift that may bring disunity and quarrel in their relationship. This will help to reduce the rate of divorce, which is increasing at an incredibly rate in Africa.

Financial Difficulties- Money is very powerful in our society and the love of it is said to be the root of all evils. Mba (1986), observed that money can often be a troublemaker. Couples should be very careful in dealing with money. Working can be encouraging for couples. Only through work can an individual fully realize himself or herself. Working will also allow both partners to be independent of the other. Therefore, neither member of the marriage will see the other as a parasite in their union. Couples should also devise a means to manage their money. They should not be too extravagant; otherwise, this may affect their marriage. It might be wise for couples to reach a compromise on how to spend and deal with their financial undertakings. Financial difficulty is today considered as one of the leading causes of divorce among families (Oforchukwu 2000).

Lack of money has an effect on marriage. Lack of money has led to crisis in marriage relationships. It has destroyed many Christian families. It is rather improper to talk about the rate of divorce among the Christian families without relating it to other variables. Poverty is largely responsible for the explosive rate of divorce among couples in Nigeria. Poverty stems from widespread unemployment. Many able couples are not properly employed in the labor force, which results in many broken families, due to the fact that unemployed couples cannot support their families.

Immaturity- Age at marriage is one of the leading factors in divorce. It seems that it is best not marry too young or wait too long before marrying. Women who marry while still in their teens are twice as likely to divorce as women in their thirties. But those who marry in their thirties are half again as likely to divorce as those who marry in their twenties (Komblum 2001). It has been observed that, higher ages at marriage are typically thought of as an indicator of female autonomy.

Age at marriage is often found to have a considerable positive effect on marriage stability, both in a western context and African population (Martin and Burmpass 1989; and

Reiners 2003). But Isiugo-Abanihe (1998) did not find a significant effect of age at marriage on marriage stability decreases with an increasing age at marriage. The age at which many modern couples marry has seriously been questioned. In the Igbo traditional society, couples married at matured age. Age greater than eighteen is considered to be matured age for women. However, this trend has changed dramatically in the modern Nigerian society. Many broken families have been associated with the immaturity and youthfulness of the married couple who get married in their teens (13-17). Marrying too young is destructive and has a tremendous impact in a relationship. Some youths are not experienced enough to face the realities of life. As a result, it is no wonder that the rate of divorce linked to youthful marriage is high. Rhyme (2010) argued that the biggest factor in marital disharmony is immaturity. In Nigeria for example, going by the generally expressed rarity of divorce in traditional Yoruba setting, the present tendencies in marital dissolution among women in metropolitan Lagos is considered sociologically significant. For instance, divorce and separation have been shown to be on the increase as a result of education and urbanization (Adedokun 1998), the incidence of remarriage is relative high among the women of reproductive age. Thus, she stressed the point that, all first marriages and most second marriages took place before the women were 40 years old and obviously still within their reproductive years.

White and Booth (2001) and Adedokun (1998) in their given pattern of marital dissolution and remarriages exhibited some age-cultural dissolution values related to marriage may be declining as a result of continued urbanization, and the influence of formal education. More importantly, these findings have long-term implications for fertility changed in Ibadan metropolis and elsewhere although, age at marriage is complicated by the same measurement issues at marriage period. For instance, higher ages at marriage are typically thought of as an indicator of female empowerment. Jones (2000) explicitly links increasing ages at marriage to a greater degree of self-arrangement of marriages, and that is considered as powerful mechanism of declining divorce rates.

Mixed Marriage- The African society is such that encourages freedom in her constitutional enactments or example, freedom of choice, freedom of worship, and freedom of association exist in the Nigerian constitution. In view of this, every individual feels that he or she is free to exercise this freedom. Unfortunately, cultural and religious differences make this practice unworkable. Nigeria has about over 250 ethnic groups. Each ethnic group has a different culture and religious practice would be couples used to be cautious on ethnic differences when choosing to get married. Unfortunately, contemporary Nigerian families do not pay much attention to this phenomenon. Among the Igbo people, mixed marriages and social stigma have been problematic in many relationships. This has a dramatic effect on Christian marriage, and has contributed to the dissolution of most marriages among the Igbo Christian families. Mixed marriage refers to both cultural and religious differences among a couple. Further, a marriage between a Catholic and a Christian of another denomination also represents a mixed marriage (Doyle 1993). Mixed marriage has long been frowned upon; cultural and religious differences have been considered an impediment. This impediment renders the marriage illicit rather than invalid. In spite of this, it has been noted that mixed marriages have been problematic in some families. However, some mixed marriages have been very successful among new couples. Mixed marriages could work where there is love and sacrifice among the parties.

It has been discovered that mixed marriage generally do not thrive, and therefore could lead to divorce. Also, some scholars believe that mixed marriage leads to the perversion of faith. For example, in any mixed marriage, the children born in the union may not get the proper

Catholic or non-Catholic doctrines. This might pose a serious threat to the religious faith of the people. However, there is no doubt that mixed marriage could work where there is mutual understanding, self-sacrifice, love, self-giving and maturity among the parties. The church is prepared to grant dispensation for mixed marriage where there is need.

Adverse Influence of In-Laws- In-laws play a vital role in families. In African society, in-laws are considered part of the family. A married daughter's parents should be able to visit their daughter's house at will. The husband is encouraged to establish a friendly relationship with his in-laws. It is expected that this healthy relationship will help to improve their relationship.

It is true that partners should endeavour to cultivate a cordial relationship with their in-laws, and this should be done in such a way that the feelings of both parties are not hurt, but respected. However, it should be noted that some in-laws have helped to disintegrate some families. This should be avoided. Also, married couples should avoid over-dependence on the parents. They should try to live independent life. They should be able to get a job of their own. They should also make effort to live in their own houses or apartments. This, no doubt, will help them to live happily in their homes (Oforchukwu, 2010).

Religious Affiliation- Different scholars perceived relationship between religious practice and marital instability in different perspectives. For instance, Isiugo-Abanihe (1998) and Tilson and Larsen (2000) revealed in their studies that Muslim marriages are found to be more stable than their Christian counterparts; but according to Brandson (1990), this pattern is opposite in Africa, particularly in Nigeria. The declining divorce rates among the Muslim unions are likely as a result of rigorous religious practices (Jones 2000).

In Bangladesh, there are Muslim divorce customs and laws for Muslim marriage. For instance, divorce of Muslim marriage is an option which is available to spouses. Thus, Muslim divorce customs and laws serve as a check to the incessant divorce rates, which were accompanied by trends in rigorous practices among Muslims (Jones 2000). This position also supports findings of Isiugo-Abanihe (1996) that the Muslim unions are more stable and Christian marriages.

Educational Attainment- Brandson (1990) claimed that education is often used as proxy for female empowerment. But Isiugo-Abanihe (1998) observed that, in some cases the relationship between female education and divorce is found to be positive. This is so because the influence of education appears to be nonlinear, with the lowest divorce rates observed among uneducated women. The findings of Tilson and Larsen (2000) in Ethiopia showed that women with no education as well as those who had attended a literacy programme showed lower risk of divorce than women with primary education. Again, according to them, women with secondary and higher education have 0.63 times the risk of divorce compared with women with primary education.

In Nigeria, for instance, education is positively associated with the occurrence of divorce and separation among the women of reproductive age. Adedokun (1998) observed that the reason why there is high incidence of divorce among women of reproductive age is that, the educated women are more likely to embrace new ideas about marriage. She stressed the point that, as the passion of sexual attraction may emerge; spouses may wish to end an unexciting marriage in favour of relationship that will provide renewed excitement. Adedokun however, observed that increasing participation of educated women in the labour force may have reduced the extent to which they are depended on men.

Societal Effects of Marriage Divorce

A review of literature demonstrated that divorce was rare in early African society. However, it is exceptionally common in contemporary communities. Even though divorce was much less common in the early period, its effects were considered to be enormous. This could be seen in the area of ethics, morality, and social-orientation. Hardon (2004) observed that the effects of divorce on society are drastic. Hardon (2004) argued that the children of divorced parents suffer the worst effects of divorce. Divorce leads to the messy dissolution of families, which hurts children. In this situation, Sons are likely to stay with their father, and daughters are more likely to stay with their mother. The aim of marriage - the creation of a family - is therefore defeated by divorce. Bascon and Hersksvits (1990) argued that the implication of this tendency is that the father-child relationship assumes a greater emphasis in society than the mother-child relationship. According to these researchers, this implication is reinforced by the pattern of custody in the wake of divorce, where sons are likely to remain with their father, and the daughters with their mother.

Similarly, the effects of parental misjudgements descend heavily on the children. For this reason, divorce is harmful and challenges the very notion of marriage. The training of children solely rests on the parents and should be performed jointly. However, in a divorced family, this cannot be the case, which has numerous consequences for children. Children may not receive necessary and adequate training and education. Harden (2004) noted that children need both parents because each plays a complementary role in the children's life. The children of divorced parents often attempt to adjust and adapt to the new situation in which they find themselves; these children run the risk of discontinuity in their emotional and intellectual development (Harden 2004). It has been found that children from divorced families do not feel secure. Hardon (2004) confirmed that the children of divorced parents are insecure. Unfortunately, these children carry these distorted feelings to married life; as a result, marital instability becomes hereditary.

The family is the bedrock of the community. Families are of paramount importance to the Nigerian society, because they are considered to be the basic unit of society. The future of Nigeria society depends very much on successful parenting and marriages. Parents must raise children according to prevailing societal norms and ways of life. On the other hand, in a family in which the parents have decided to divorce each other, the children suffer. In most cases, the children of divorced families do not acquire adequate and sound life training. When they grow up, some of them may become societal detriments. The children of divorced parents may be morally defective, failing to fear neither God nor man. Harden (2004) observed that the immediate consequence of divorce is often a moral and social aberration. Some divorced offspring are lawless. Harden (2004) argued that the greatest cause of juvenile crime is a broken home. Lawless communities disturb the peace of Igbo society. As a result, life becomes unsafe for the people. Furthermore, in a united home, the parent-child relationship takes a certain form. A child is a gift from the giver of life - God. As a result, parents are happy when their relationship produces a child. The life is an indication of their love. This will help them to establish a permanent bond of affection between parents and children. However, in a divorced family, unity is lacking. The children lack parental love and affection. This will also affect the behavior of the children when they grow up. Their relationships to other people may be affected.

It is a joint responsibility of parents to train and discipline their children. Parents should be mindful to care for and love their children. A relationship between a parent and child is reciprocal. As it is the duty of parents to provide for the needs of their children, so also are

children duty bound to look after their parents in their old age. But when the marriage bond is dissolved, this service will be lacking. As a result, parents will not be taken care of in their old age by their grown-up children, because they were rejected and neglected as children.

It is not only the children who suffer the effects of divorce. It has been found that parents also suffer from the injury done by divorce. In the Igbo society, divorce is regarded as a stigma. It may be difficult for both husband and wife to cope from the emotional and psychological effects of divorce. Harden (2004) observed that both husband and wife may be crushed by a sense of shame, fear, and hatred. Therefore, it becomes difficult for them to live a secured and meaningful life. Sometimes, divorced parents may go to the extreme and seek an unfulfilling life through drunkenness and sexual immorality. Women suffer especially when divorce becomes inevitable. It is difficult for them to get financial support. Obi (1990) observed that a divorced wife may depend on relatives or else be forced to lower her standard of living. More seriously, the woman may not get a job to support herself and her children (Oforchukwu, 2010).

Conclusion and Recommendation

Traditionally in African society, marriage was considered a lifelong contract. Indissoluble, as it was looked upon as a permanent, social, and spiritual bond between a man and his wife, as well as their respective families. Marriage was almost universally stable, and divorce was rare. As a result, divorce did not play a significant role in African society. In the early African societies, the community usually settled quarrels and disputes, which precluded divorce in most cases. A husband's family members were required to hear about his decision for divorce and judge the case on its merit, weighing all the consequences of the outcome. As a result, it was not easy for a man to divorce his wife during the early period. If divorce was allowed in traditional African society, it generally was on the grounds of adultery, which is considered a sin against God, nature, and society. Ultimately, no matter the outcome, marriage is not one man's business in traditional Africa society.

Due to the importance of producing children in African marriage, sterility is an issue that may promote divorce. If a married couple realized that the wife was sterile or the husband was impotent, and then strains and stresses could develop in the marriage. These strains could have prompted a divorce. However, it is important to note that sterility did not provide justifiable grounds for divorce in African society. Rather, it more often prompted a husband to seek a second wife. Sometimes the first wife herself took the initiative in procuring a second wife for her husband as in the case of Sarai and Abram. Ultimately, divorce was seldom permitted in traditional African society, and the rate of divorce was generally very low. But today, marriage divorce is a growing social ill in our societies. This is due to several factors, which include childlessness, adultery, quarrelling, alcoholism, socialization and technological advancement, financial difficulties, immaturity, mixed marriage, adverse influence of in-laws, religious affiliation, and educational attainment.

Marriage divorce has serious adverse effects on both the children and parents. The children lack parental love and affection and run the risk of discontinuity in their emotional and intellectual development. Furthermore, the greatest cause of juvenile crime is a broken home. It has been found that parents also suffer from the injury done by divorce. Divorce is regarded as a stigma. It may be difficult for both husband and wife to cope from the emotional and psychological effects of divorce. Parents may be crushed by a sense of shame, fear, and hatred. Therefore, it becomes difficult for them to live a secured and meaningful life. Sometimes, divorced parents may go to the extreme and seek an unfulfilling life through drunkenness and

sexual immorality. Women suffer especially when divorce becomes inevitable. It is difficult for them to get financial support. In view of the above discussions, it is recommended that couples should avoid and circumvent all the factors responsible for marriage divorce in order to have a happy and loving family.

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