

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF RESPONSIBILITIES OF HUSBAND AND WIFE IN WESTERN AND ISLAMIC FAMILY SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

This paper highlights key concepts and gives an overview of the husband and wife responsibilities as one of the key element of prosperous, effective and efficient marital life. The paper focuses on enhancing stability among the married couples by adhering to their responsibilities. Each society has its own rules and expectation for husband and wife which are not different between genders but also between cultures. Husband and wife have standards and specific responsibilities to do, and they must live up to those responsibilities. However, in most societies, domestic responsibilities become a major source of marital conflicts among the marital couples. While examining strict adherence to responsibilities of the married couples, the paper recommends that couples should live up to expectation on the foundation of strong moral principles of equity, moral fairness respect and social justice in the discharge of their numerous responsibilities. The methodology is based on secondary sources of data for preceding scholars had been employed to strengthen its way to a simple conclusion.

Keywords: Husband wife, marriage, household responsibilities, family, children, divorce.

INTRODUCTION

The objective of this paper is to understand the link between Islamic and western family responsibilities. The paper will also determine the challenges and prospects of family obligations among the married couples in both Western and Islamic family system. Lastly to gain a better understanding of how such responsibilities are shared among the couples. Each society across the globe recognizes marriage because it benefits society regarding mutual co-existence combined with regulation of sexual relationship. Marriage as the union of man and woman is found across all cultures, but in the present development, marriage is no longer a union between man and woman, with the legalization of same sex marriages in the Western world and other African societies like South Africa. Marriage is now between man and man and between woman and woman according to the time and place of the culture involved (Anderson 2013).

However, in Nigeria, same sex marriages are still regarded as taboo among all the tribes in the country. Marriage according to (Alubo 2016), is a recognized and formal process through which a man takes a woman as a wife. This formalization may be through native law and custom, through law courts, as well as through formal religious rituals such as church wedding. With the advent of so many dual career marriages, the division of domestic responsibilities has become a major sign of concern. Changes in our cultural values have contributed significantly to the problem of husband and wife relationship because they ignore an agreement that both a

husband and wife should share responsibilities, particularly children care. However, change in behavior has not kept pace with the change in values. Domestic responsibilities are a time bomb in many marriages.

However, according to Alubo (2016 p177), Marriage is the process by which two people a male and a female make their relationship public, official, and permanent. It is the joining of two opposite sexes in a bond that putatively lasts until death. Marriage usually begins with a willingness of both spouses to share domestic responsibilities; the groom welcome help he gets from his wife because, before the wedding, he had been doing it all alone as a bachelor. At this point in marriage, neither of them regarded domestic responsibilities as an important marital issue. But the time bomb is ticking. When does it explode? It was when the children arrived; children create huge needs, both a greater need for income and greater domestic responsibilities. In that case, both spouses must take on new responsibilities. In another related development, Douglas (2008) maintained that marriage in all societies exist to bring a man and a woman together as husband and wife to be father and mother to any children their marriage produces, the sole responsibilities of their children proper upbringing coupled with the provision of their basic necessity of life are entirely lies on their shoulders, anything short of these expectations would surely bring a serious problem among the couples.

Firth in his book element of social organization, cited in (Giddens 1979) explains that 'the idea of the structure of society must be concerned with the ordered relations of parts to a whole.' A structure according to Firth, is seen therefore as being drawn on by human agents and their actions and human actions serve to produce and reproduce the social relations. The structure is thus a resource deployed by humans in their actions, making structure both enabling and disabling. According to (Giddens 1979), the structure is the study of knowledge of how things including (marital relations) are done by social actors i.e., couples, the study of social practices which are used to gain that knowledge, and the capabilities of these practices, for example, what they can do. This served to show that social relations are also dependent upon the social actors. (Bhaskar 1986), "conceives social relationships as a collection of internally related positions, for example, the position of wife and husband". Bhaskar holds the view that social structures are separated from the social interaction of individual agents and points out that they exist in the unperceivable transcendental realm of being.

Marriage increases the odds that a man will be committed to both the children that he helps create and to the woman with whom he does so. Marital responsibilities are the fundamental building block of all marriage civilization; couples responsibilities help to channel procreative love into a stable institution that provides for the orderly and rearing of the next generation.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES OF MARITAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN ISLAM

According to (Abdulqadir 1999) marriage is an obligatory act in Islam so long as someone is matured, marriage is a legal contract between a man and woman and both of them are to consent to the marriage on their free wills. It is a decision that will have a major impact, not only on



someone's life but also with the future wife and those who are close. Marriage completes half of one's religion. It is a sacred contract in the presence of Allah that compels someone to make commitments whether male or female. Marriage is one of the strongest relationships which Islam stresses, encourages and considers as one of the Prophets' practices.

Thus (Abdulqadir 1999), viewed that marriage in Islam is not a business deal negotiated by two partners, nor is it a social contract whereby material benefits and obligations are evaluated in contrast to one another. It is something solemn, something sacred and it would be erroneous to define it in simple physical or material and western terms. Moral charity, spiritual elevation, social integrity, human stability, peace, and mercy constitute the major elements of marriage (Abdulqadir 1999). Ansari (2002) maintained that when two Muslims negotiate a marriage contract, they have every intention of sharing many sets of tasks or responsibilities for lasting peace and harmony to strive. Indeed, Islam attaches much importance to marriage rulings, etiquette, and spouses' rights in such a way as a guarantee marital stability and permanence and creates a successful family in which children are brought up enjoying psychological stability, observing devoutness and moral integrity, and displaying excellence in various aspects of life.

Western societies according to Ansari (2002) see the division of responsibilities in Islamic societies as a way of domination and inequality by men over the women. Few have the doubt that despite the distribution of tasks and responsibilities, the women in Islamic societies were relegated to the background Abdulqadir (1999).

Separation of Responsibilities of Husband and Wife in Islamic Family System

Responsibilities have to do with certain conditions which are binding on the Muslim couples to adhere strictly and are backed by legal sanctions, violations of such responsibilities are regarded as a sin. Therefore once people married, they must accept such responsibilities. Abdulqadir (1999), maintained that Allah has entitled husband and wife to certain rights and obligations, made it incumbent upon both of them to discharge their responsibilities and encourages them to engage in anything that is bound to promote marital life and preserve it. Indeed, they are both responsible for the proper and appropriate upkeep of the family, and they should not demand something beyond their capacity as the Quran states,

“ And women have rights similar to those of men over them in kindness” Al-Baqarah, 2:228. In line with the interpretation of the above Qur'anic verse Ansari (2002: p193) has documented that;

- It is the incontestable responsibility of the husband to provide food, drink, clothing, shelter and general care on his wife and children in accordance with his means without extravagance or miserliness.
- Living in kindness, show them good character, kindness, gentleness in word and deed.
- The wife should be obedient and kind to her husband. She should be pleased with him and must not anger him; the primary responsibility of the wife is to obey her husband in all legal duties.

- Attentiveness to his sexual needs. In Islam, sexual desires are only satisfied through marriage. Therefore marriage serves as an avenue for the satisfaction of sexual desires for both husband and wife. They have to make themselves attractive to each other to have the highest level of satisfaction.
- Not leaving the house without his permission, it is the responsibility of the husband alone to give permission to his wife to go out or not to do. The wife must restrain herself to where he instructs her.
- Services a woman is responsible for serving her husband in kindness by preparing and serving meals to him and undertaking other household chores.
- Also the wife may take proper care of the house activities and make it a happy place for the whole family.

In surah ar Rum: ayah 21 Allah (SWT) says, ‘‘ And among His signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves that you may dwell in tranquillity with them and He has put love and mercy between your hearts: verily in that are signs for those who reflect’’. However, Holy Prophet (PBUH) said ‘‘ Allah is pleased when a husband plays with his wife due to this He fixes (THAWAB) good reward for them r He established halal rizq (lawful sustenance) for them’’ (Al-ifsah ibn Hajr Haitham). In Islam, Husband will take almost all the responsibilities of caring and provision of basic needs of the family. Women were not allowed to go out at any time until and unless with a concrete reason.

SPOUSES RESPONSIBILITIES IN WESTERN SOCIETIES

According to Alubo (2016) maintained that Marriage in the western societies signifies the process in which two people make their relationship public, official and permanent. It is the joining of two people in a bond that punitively lasts until death but in practices is increasingly cut short by divorce. Some of the responsibilities of married couples in western societies are;

- In western societies the husband is regarded as being a ruler over the members of the family and the wife is then described as the ruler of the house of her husband.
- The couples are living on the foundations and expectations of marriage moral principles.
- Care, affection, and love for each other.
- Patience and tolerance, both spouses must exercise patience and take into account the positive aspects of each other’s personality.
- Couples share financial responsibilities of the family through the provision of basic needs, unlike in African societies where husband remain the bread winner of the household.
- Both spouses must create time for caring and rearing of children unlike in African societies where the whole responsibility of rearing children lies in a woman alone (Gottman 1994 p 126).

However, failure to provide such responsibilities from either the husband or the wife may lead to a time bomb, separation and divorce may arise. According to Gottman (1994), Separation is when a couple (whether by marriage, civil union or de facto) both agree to live apart.



Separation also involves a court order that mandates the rights and duties of a couple while they are still married but living apart. Divorce, on the other hand, is the termination of a marital union, the cancellation and reorganizing of the legal duties and responsibilities of marriage, thus, dissolving the bonds of matrimony between a married couple under the rule of law of the particular country or state.

Similarities of responsibilities among couples in western and Islamic family system

- Both western and Islamic family settings maintained that husband and wife are for mutual support and comfort fitting each other as a garment fits the body.
- Teaching and advising her, the husband must enjoin his family members to act rightly and forbid them to misbehave. The wife must also advise her husband, guide him to the right path and discuss with him ways of giving the best possible upbringing for their children.
- Patience and tolerance, both spouses must exercise patience and take into account the positive aspects of each other's personality.

LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES

From the above discussions, it is clear that the responsibilities of husband and wife provides the basis of family life and aims at producing these attitudes and behavioral patterns our societies want to foster for the sustenance of good cordial relationship and general stability of the marital system. These duties and responsibilities are necessary, failure to meet them will inevitably result in instability of the entire family as a social unit. Indeed the failure of the marriage partners to live up to expectation and respond to their responsibilities towards each other has been the major concern among the stakeholders in most of the world (Farzaneh 2012 p13). In some African societies, today marital breakdown became an order of the day and is largely as a result of improper discharging of responsibilities among the married couples. The problem of economic recession is gradually making it difficult for men to provide enough basic needs to their families.

CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

The finding reveals that in every marital life, there must be a willingness of both the spouses to share domestic responsibilities. Domestic responsibilities should be seen as very important in marital issue. Love, care, fair play, and justice are the main tools for having a lasting peace and mutual coexistence in every marital life. This is because there can be no good stability in any social relationship where these qualities and virtues are absent. The separation of responsibility between husband and wife is geared towards the survival of the marriage and in maintaining the family as an interdependent, cooperative and cohesive unit for the interest of all parties involved. Thus, the awareness of these duties and responsibilities by husband and wife and carrying them out go a long way in ensuring family stability. Families who have been established on the firm



foundation of love should normally not experience unexpected problems concerning the sharing of responsibilities.

There is, therefore, the need to re-examine the moral basis for the institution of marriage. When this is done, the exploitation of husband over the wife or that of the wife over the husband in an unhealthy and almost castrating manner will not arise. If household responsibilities are given to whoever is in the mood to do them, nothing much will be done. If one spouse demands help from the other, that will have an unsatisfactory outcome. But if the assignment of these tasks can be mutually agreed upon by willing spouses that accept the responsibilities, everything will run smoothly. Lastly, responsibilities should be well spelled out in order to avoid conflict of interest among the married couples.

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