

## **DIVORCED: BURDENS AND PAINS OF THE CHILDREN IN SOKOTO STATE**

**Abubakar G Ibrahim, Jummai Saratu Abubakar, Saidu Ibrahim Dan Dange**

**gidado.sadiq@yahoo.co.uk**

College of General Studies and Department of Social Development

Umaru Ali Shinkafi Polytechnic Sokoto

### **ABSTRACT**

*Even though the current rate of Divorce in Sokoto is not well documented, divorce and its consequences are a great concern to couples and the communities and society in general. Divorce and Marriage are two social issues and private concerns; Divorce is a major life event that potentially has substantial negative consequences for the children's mental, social, and physical health. Divorce leads children to experience many changes in their lives, including changes in residential apartments, economic redundancy, deviant behaviors and other hardship associated with the separation. Sokoto state is a predominantly Muslim society; many women accuse men of divorcing them recklessly and leaving them with the financial burden of rearing and caring for their children. Many divorced women shared their experiences, their pain and the burden they bear in the cause of raising their children. Therefore, government and community leaders should be more proactive in reducing the menace of Divorce in Sokoto state. In conclusion, the study reveals a high rate of Divorce in Sokoto State, and it has adverse effects on the children. Finally, the paper has offered some valuable suggestions.*

**Keywords:** Divorce, Divorced Women, Children, Marriage,

### **INTRODUCTION**

Official data on the divorce rate in Sokoto appear non-existent, but men pronounce most divorce cases in the north. Many women in Sokoto state accuse men of divorcing them recklessly and leaving them with the financial burden of rearing and caring for their children. Divorced women blame this growing problem on the region's patriarchal social structure, which places a high premium on men's opinion of women. Islamic scholars in parts of Sokoto state are worried by the growing divorce rates and link it to ignorance of religious doctrine on what Marriage should be obligations and spousal rights. According to Majzub, Mansor, and Sciences (2012), divorce has a lot of consequences on the couples' social and economic well-being. Divorced women are usually trapped in a vicious cycle of financial problems and other traumatic life events.

The personal interview of a few divorced women revealed their experiences, their pain and the burden they bear:

- At 21, Sadiya Attahiru is a divorcee living in Madera Jelani, in Sokoto state; Sadiya's Marriage to a young man of her choice had crashed after only six months. According to her, Marriage is complicated, and hers was further intricate by domestic violence that often landed her in the hospital. Sadiya's story is one among millions of others that depict a disturbing rise in the rate of Divorce in Sokoto state. Stakeholders admit the growing menace calls for concern and link it to the region's emerging social

problems such as drug addiction, criminality, and other vices among young men and women.

- At 38, Suwaiba Saidu was four times unlucky. She married four times; her first Marriage crashed after 12 years. She had six children with her first husband. She remarried again, but her husband died. She then remarried again, but the Marriage lasted only 40 days. Finally, she remarried in the Gagi area within the Sokoto metropolis for the fourth time. She gave birth to a son, and the husband's relatives took care of the naming ceremony because the husband had run away and abandoned her. Tired of waiting for her husband, she approached a nearby Sharia court to summon him. Lastly, the Marriage was eventually dissolved, and she was left with a four-month baby. After some years, Suwaiba says she bears the burden of her four children as all her ex-husbands have abandoned their responsibilities of taking care of the children; she made several attempts to demand money for the children's upkeep but all in vain. She's the one taking care of feeding, education, clothing, and providing health care services to her children.
- The story is similar for Hafsat, whose 17-years-old Marriage crashed six years ago and now bears the moral burden and finances her children's daily affairs. She says there has been no financial support from their father for more than seven years.

The paper revealed that women tend to suffer from loneliness, lack of self-recognition, and lack of care after divorce. Moreover, the causes and the socioeconomic impacts of divorce on women are economically weak. They sell petty homemade items and other small businesses for survival with their children, which invariably makes their lives miserable.

## **THE CONCEPT OF DIVORCE**

"Divorce" comes from the Latin word "divortium," which means separation. It has several meanings. Divorce is a judicial declaration dissolving the Marriage in whole or in part, releasing the husband and wife from the matrimonial obligation to live together. Divorce is any formal separation of husband and wife according to established customs and traditions. (Coontz, 2007). For Goldstein (2008), divorce is the legal separation of husband and wife effected by the judgment or decree of a court and either totally dissolving the married relations or suspending its effects so far as the combination of the practice. He noted that divorce might create some vital problems in the family, like adjusting to new life.

According to Ugwuanyi (2021), sweet home is the paradise of life, the first pleasant taste of heaven, and it is the handwork of peace, love, understanding, endurance and tolerance. In such a home, the pot of love is hung conspicuously for all to draw from and refill. He stated that a divorced home is the opposite of the above. Dike (1999) noted that divorce is not a new social phenomenon. It has constantly constituted the primary source of family disintegration and thus has attracted much attention. Divorce is one aspect of marital disorganization that could frustrate the destiny of the children of such marriages.

Sussman (2001) pointed out that in typical African societies, divorce may be due to the woman becoming somewhat insubordinate to her husband; moral turpitude on the part of the women...prolonged illness on the part of a woman such as mental disorder; barrenness on

the part of the woman or impotent on the man's part; much influence from the relations of the woman; disagreement over religious activities; stealing or tale-bearing on the part of the woman; harshness or ill-treatment such as constant beating by the man; prolong lack of support by the man to his wife; disagreement over conjugal right; and failure to complete the bride payment by the man.

### **CAUSES OF DIVORCE**

- ❖ Falling out of love among the couple due to irreconcilable disputes
- ❖ Lack of commitment to managing marriage financial obligations and problems
- ❖ Husbands abandon their wives for an extended period
- ❖ Drugs and Alcohol addiction on the part of the husband
- ❖ Communication problems
- ❖ Lack of maturity and physical abuse, especially on couples who were forced to marry.
- ❖ Domestic violence and lack of patience and tolerance to one another
- ❖ Unnecessary interference by in-laws in the affairs of married couples.
- ❖ Lack of shared interest and incompatibility among the couples
- ❖ Infidelity and adultery among married couples is a common reason for divorce

### **EFFECTS OF DIVORCE ON CHILDREN**

According to Adamu and Damota (2019), children drop out of school, engage in addiction, commit sexual intercourse before Marriage and develop delinquent behavior in the community they live in. Crimes, theft and immoral acts of conduct stem from divorced families

#### **Negative Economic Effects of Divorce on Children**

Economically, there are many adverse effects on children. For example, they will find it very difficult to buy drugs when they fall ill, have difficulty paying school fees, increased worries about money for basic needs, and are complicated to feed on a balanced diet and get clean clothes, among other problems.

#### **Educational Effects of Divorce on Children**

There are some adverse effects on the children's education, including unavailability of funds to pay school fees, decreased academic performance non concentration in class activities, absence from school, increased chances of expulsion and finally, drop out of school. Bah and Research (2019) maintained that divorce increases poor academic performance, absenteeism, and lack of educational support.

#### **Adverse Behavioural Effects of Divorce on Children**

The negative behavioral effects of divorce include becoming easily violent, involvement in drug abuse, crime, and children will continue to experience increased antisocial behaviors, anxiety, and depression (Williams-Owens, 2017). In addition, conflict in marital relations can lead to poor health conditions, poor general welfare, diminished children's educational attainments, and increased school dropouts.

### **Negative Health Effects of Divorce on Children**

The paper pointed out some negative health effects of divorce on children in the same vein. Poor attention to sick children due to non-availability of funds is one of the major problems; it also increases chances of contracting deadly diseases, which includes asthma, meningitis, malaria, typhoid, kwashiorkor and epilepsy; all this occurs with the children of divorced couples, increased in unwanted pregnancy by the children of divorced families. Moreover, daughters of divorced parents have more abortions than non-divorced parents (Bah & Research, 2019).

### **Negative Impacts of Divorce on the Living Conditions of the Children**

Additionally, children of divorced families are subjected to living in slums, crowded rooms with no ventilation, low standard of living, living in a poor environment and increased feelings of insecurity and rejection—a sense of loss in a new environment and living with unfamiliar and different families (Uwagie-Ero, 2014).

### **Negative Emotional Effects of Divorce on Children**

The paper revealed that divorce negatively affects children's development. For instance, children emotionally feel lonely, feel disappointed anytime they think their parents are separated, have low self-esteem, get annoyed easily, and feel violent and other negative feelings.

Haimi, Lerner, and Genomics (2016) maintained that divorce increased anxiety, depression, anger, internalizing disorders, decreased self-esteem and increased suicide.

In the words of Akter, Begum, and Remarriage (2012), they opined that women would suffer from various types of psychological problems. Symptoms found in different functional areas

- Physiological function (e.g., sleep disturbance, numbness etc.)
- Emotional function (e.g., helplessness, frustration, hopelessness, suicide etc.)
- Cognitive impairments (e.g., distressful thoughts about real-life crises? I have become valueless etc.)
- Behavioral impairments (e.g., losing temper for every silly thing, quarreling with family members, relatives etc.)
- Social functions impairments (e.g., avoided any social program, embarrassed to meet other people, isolated etc.).

Traditionally, the effects of divorce on depression and other aspects of mental health have been regarded as evidence that marriage benefits health. However, the associated crisis is more intense among women (Raley, Sweeney, & Family, 2020). No doubt in Sokoto, divorced women are going through a difficult situation due to separation; this is because their former husbands, out of anger, will stop taking care of their children living with the divorced women.

### **WAYS OF PREVENTING DIVORCE IN SOKOTO STATE**

There is a need for a high level of awareness about the severe consequences of divorce among the couples, including quick amicable settlement of marital disputes between the

couples, minimization or prevention of disputes among the couples, provision of proper counseling, public sensitization on the adverse effect of divorce on the couples, prohibition of forced and early marriages and lastly the Sokoto state House of Assembly should enact and enforce laws against divorce.

Kepler (2015) maintained that constant prayers would promote open consultation, soften couples' minds, increase self-empathy responsibility, and focus on resolving marital disputes.

## **CONCLUSION**

The fact is that the current rate of Divorce in Sokoto is not adequately documented. Therefore, divorce and its effects on the children is a great worry to the families and society in general. Divorce is rapidly increasing in the state, and children of divorced couples are at the receiving end; they were subjected to untold hardship due to the separation of their parents. The main aim of this paper is to analyze the pain and burden of divorce on the children of the divorcees. Divorce negatively affects all aspects of children's development and welfare. Therefore, the government must be more proactive in tackling the excesses of Divorce in Sokoto state.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

To do away with the negative effects of divorce on the children, it is suggested that:

- ❖ Divorce couples should try as much as possible to maintain a cordial relationship and avoid using foul language on each other.
- ❖ If the Marriage is blessed with the children, the father should provide essential financial support to the divorced woman for the development and general welfare of the children.
- ❖ There is a need for elders to support couples to resolve any marital differences before divorce amicably.
- ❖ As a matter of urgency, community leaders should conduct public sensitizations on the causes of divorce and its dire consequences on children.
- ❖ The government must support the various activities of NGOs that work with families, especially those in difficult situations.
- ❖ State House of Assembly must enact and enforce laws that will prevent or reduce the rate of divorce in the state.

## **REFERENCES**

Akter, M., Begum, R. J. J. o. D., & Remarriage. (2012). Factors for divorce of women undergoing Divorce in Bangladesh. 53(8), 639-651.

- Bah, Y. M. J. I.-I. J. o. S. S., & Research, H. (2019). Divorce and its Negative Impacts on Children. 2(07), 01-50.
- Coontz, S. J. F. p. (2007). The origins of modern divorce. 46(1), 7-16.
- Damota, M. D. J. A. E. (2019). The effect of divorce on families' life. 46.
- Dike, O. J. T. N. J. o. S. S. (1999). Divorce in Igbo Society: Continued Indigenous Normative Mindedness. 3, 96-98.
- Goldstein, M. (2008). Domestic Violence Stalks in Many Guises. Pahrump Valley Times dated 21 March 2008. In.
- Haimi, M., Lerner, A. J. J. o. C., & Genomics, M. (2016). The impact of parental separation and divorce on the health status of children and the ways to improve it. 4(1), 1-7.
- Majzub, R. M., Mansor, S. J. P.-S., & Sciences, B. (2012). Perception and adjustment of adolescents towards divorce. 46, 3530-3534.
- Raley, R. K., Sweeney, M. M. J. J. o. M., & Family. (2020). Divorce, partnering, and stepfamilies: A decade in review. 82(1), 81-99.
- Sussman, L. (2001). Marriage and Family counseling Jos. In: Fab Education Books.
- Ugwuanyi, L. O. (2021). Uncovering Needs in African Thought Through Igbo Proverbs on Lack, Care and Duty. In *Towards an African Political Philosophy of Needs* (pp. 131-149): Springer.
- Uwagie-Ero, O. (2014). Domestic Violence (DV) in Families: A Critical Review of the Contemporary Perceptions of Domestic Violence in Families.
- Williams-Owens, W. M. (2017). The behavioral effects divorce can have on children.