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The Increasing Rate of Divorce and Its Effects on the Family and Society's Development in the 21st Century: A Study of Yakurr Local Government Area of Cross River State

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Abstract

The study empirically investigates the increasing rate of divorce in Yakurr Local Government Area and the effects it has on both the family institution and society's development. The paper defines divorce as the ending of marriage or the dissolution of marriage which may be through legal proceedings and judgments; church pronouncement, the repayment of the bride price, the re-marrying of one of the partners to another person or by the simple agreement of the people involved. The paper reveals that despite government's effort to protect marriages by enacting laws, formulating policies that encourages Christian or court marriages, establishes social welfare division to treat marital problems, divorce still continue to soar in Yakurr society. The paper seeks to find out factors responsible for the increasing rate of divorce in the study area. The study is anchored on the value conflict theory of Karl Marx to analyze the increasing rate of divorce in Yakurr and its effects on the family and society's development. The study was carried out among divorcees who are resident in Yakurr Local Government Area. Two (200) hundred respondents were selected from four wards in the study area and cluster samples were drawn from the four major communities in the Local Government Area viz: Ugep, Ekor, Nko and Mkpani. The wards were selected through the use of simple random sampling technique. Questionnaires were administered through hand delivery by the researcher. The findings also revealed that there are certain social structures and institutions that are responsible for this increase. Concurrently, the findings show that this rate of divorce significantly affects the family as well as society's development. That is broken families breeds maladjusted individuals who later turn out to become criminals; and child abuse is the product of broken families. The paper suggests possible means of reducing, if not to eradicate divorce (Panacea for divorce rate) in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Divorce, family, society's development, modern family attitudes, marriage, broken homes/broken families, feminist movements.*

Introduction and Background

Like an African proverb which says that it takes a marriage to raise a family and build a society goes to confirm the trite fact that marriage is an essential step towards family formation; and that the family is not only the smallest unit but also the foundation stone of the society. If, therefore divorce occurs in marriage, problems arise in both the family and society in general. Thus, the rampant breakdown of marriages and the precarious future of our children have not only become the mainstay of family case work since its inception, but have also provided a more thoughtful or provocative research studies by scholars in recent times.

Thomas (2003) had expressed the fear that "the most crucial problem that mankind is facing and that required prompt attention is how to stop the increasing rate of divorce in our societies." Divorce is considered to pose a serious threat on the peaceful existence and social functioning of the family institution as well as society's development. Evidence abounds to prove that divorce breeds mal-adjusted personalities and is the real root cause of most crimes and delinquencies among youths in the society. It also breeds disorganization in the basic units of socialization.

Social analyst, Martin (1982) had said that the "rate of divorce if allowed to continue up to the end of the 21st century, so many families shall have crumpled and the society is sure to suffer from incurable dysfunction." Rate of divorce affects three basic institutions, viz marriage, family and the society. Although, each of them are different phenomena, there are interconnected and each has a fundamental role to play in the existence and development of children. The fact remains also that each of these institutions promotes divorce in diverse ways. It is true that the child first belong to parents to constitute the family. The society later exists as a resource for the family. When a child is to be raised, the society supports the family. At the same time, when the family faces problems, societal support comes in the form of help from extended relations, friends, government services like the law, the hospital services etc.

In the same vein, the family and society have promoted divorce on a large scale such that our marriages have fallen apart. Rather than work to rebuild our marriages, the society with its idea of modern families have instead taken the bricks of learning the mortar of cultural institutions, religion and politics and used them to build the ivory towers towards feminism: women liberation, gender equality etc to threaten the stability of marriages. Reflecting upon daily events, one sees that divorce is on the increase, exacerbated by these social structures and others like urbanization with its loose kinship grouping and early marriages. All these in turn play major roles in destroying the family and kill the drive necessary to sustain and build our nation.

The Yakurr society is not an exception with respect to the above situations. The sight of divorced men and women is all too common in the area. Nearly four out of ten marriages in Yakurr suffer from divorce, and soon it may be six out of ten. The research therefore intends to investigate this explosive rate of divorce in Yakurr society, and the effect it has on the family in particular and society's development in general. Emphasis will be placed on certain social structures that aggravate the divorce rate. These include, early age of marriage, urbanization and modern family studies. On the effects of divorce on the family and society's development, the focus will be on child abuse and crime in the society respectively.

The Problem

Given that the issue of divorce or broken homes is regarded by most people as the most troubling matter in our society, it is also to be considered as the number one social problem facing mankind. This is because divorce has reverberating effects, generating other social problems. Indeed. It is seen in many cycles as the real root cause of poverty, crime, drug addiction, cultism and psycho-physiological disorders. Perhaps, the injunction that says violence begets violence is true in this matter. Broken homes produce ill-nurtured children and when children are not properly nurtured or socialized, a civil society is not possible. Such children lack good character or virtue to reflect their ability to become responsible citizens required for nation-building.

Yakurr society is not an exception in the above respects. Observation shows that the trend of divorce is relatively high. Until recently, research studies have identified the causes of divorce to include adultery, wife battery, impotency, barrenness, incompatibility, separation, poverty, irretrievable breakdown of marriages etc but little have been said about certain other factors that are really exacerbating the rise in recent times. That is, nothing has been said about the culture of early marriages among Yakurr, the problems of urbanization and the upsurge of feminist movements that are even of a serious threat than any other consideration. In the same vein, a study is yet to critically investigate into the effects of divorce on the family as it aggravates child abuse in Yakurr society on the one hand and the effects of divorce on society's development as it produces criminals in the society.

It is a historical fact that Yakurr is a typical double unilineal society and by this very nature prevents marriages from break up. The Yakurr people traditionally frowns at divorce and utilizes a lot of socio-cultural structures to protect marriages from collapse. Like in all African societies, marriages in Yakurr have been patterned by folkways, governed by local mores, and reinforced by moral codes, and that community opinion governed marital expectations and obligations, and that any deviation from such expectations is chastised or ridiculed into compliance. This provided married couples with an understanding of what was expected of them and the consequences of divorce. Thus, divorce is viewed seriously as a taboo or an abomination, especially for whoever is responsible for such a breakup. The civil government too, has tried to protect our marriages by enacting laws, formulating policies that encourages Christian or court marriages, have established the social welfare division to treat marital problems. Government grants have also been paid to such organizations like the marriage guidance council, the family welfare association, parental federation of Nigeria, while family planning is now incorporated in the national health service, all in a bid to protect our marriages.

All these efforts, notwithstanding, divorce continue to soar in an alarming proportion in Yakurr society. And its effect on members of family in particular and the society in general can never be under-estimated.

It is in view of the foregoing that this study is proposed to address the following research proposition:

- i) What are the factors responsible for the increasing rate of divorce in Yakurr society in recent times?
- ii) In what ways has divorce affected the family in Yakurr local government area?
- iii) In what form is society's development affected by the increasing rate of divorce in Yakurr society?
- iv) Is there any significant relationship between the increasing rate of divorce and socio-cultural factors like early age of marriage, urbanization and modern family attitudes?
- v) Is there any significant association between the effect of divorce on the family and society; and child abuse and crime in Yakurr respectively?

Objectives

The research was primarily design to:

- a) Determine if the increasing rate of divorce in Yakurr is significantly caused by the culture of early marriage.
- b) Find out if the increasing rate of divorce in Yakurr is significantly the result of urbanization.
- c) Ascertain if the increasing rate of divorce in Yakurr is significantly caused by the in Hue nee of feminism.
- d) Determine if the effects of divorce on the family have any significant association with child abuse.
- e) Determine if the effect of divorce rate on society's development has any significant relationship with crime in the society.

Review of Literature

Meaning of Divorce

Abercrombie, Hill and Turner (2000) opined that divorce is the legal dissolution of a valid marriage while both parents are still alive, leaving them free to remarry. According to this scholar, the rise in divorce rates has been the major cause of the rise in the number of single parent families, even if the parents remarry eventually. Equally, Hughes, Kroehler, James and Zandan (1999) while examining the issue of divorce affirmed that divorce exacts a considerable emotional and physical toll from all family members. Children raised by single parents are more likely to drop out of high school to use drugs, to have teen births, to have illegitimate children, and to be poorer than children raised in two-parent-homes. Divorce as the name implies therefore means the ending of marriage or the dissolution of a marriage which may be through legal proceedings and judgments; church pronouncement, the repayment of the bride price, the remarrying of one of the partners to another person or by the simple agreement of the people involved.

Causes of Divorce

Onigu and Ogionwo (1979) listed the causes of divorce to include male impotence, sexual deprivation, cruelty by one of the spouses, childlessness, increasing poverty, hard labour in the family', adultery and infidelity, growing incompatibility between spouses or between one of them and the in-laws etc. Macaulay (1989), also supported the above views when he spelt out the following factors as the causes of divorce. They include: Adultery, stinginess, laziness and violent temper. Others are loss of interest, stealing which is considered as an embarrassment to the family name, dissatisfactions by elder's wife and bad character. Fullerton (1977) observed that in the Mediterranean

societies, children are so important that "a barren-wife is divorced or sent away with immediate effect. They believe that such a woman had failed in her most important duty." And in their own study carried out to determine whether or not children play an important role in marital satisfaction, Mickey and Bain (1970) found out that both husband and wives mentioned children as one of the greatest satisfactions of marriage, and that in the absence of children, divorce is likely to occur.

In Yakurr, just like most other societies, people who have different characteristics and ideologies often find themselves married. Some of them went into marriage as a result of desperation to unionize themselves in marriage. But they soon discovered their mistake, because they cannot cope with one another. Some who married for

economic convenience, when once the economic power is no longer there, the marriage breaks. Yet, some girls were merely posted to their husbands who they have little or no opportunity of courting.

Enang (2003) also identified insecure occupational level of the husband and the practice of polygamy as significant causes of divorce. He added that low bride price encourages broken homes and that divorce is rare among societies with extreme patrilineage. Also, stressful conditions of war and unwanted pregnancy have been identified as being able to lead to divorce. Likewise, marriage at a very young age has greater proneness to divorce. From the foregoing, though the rate of divorce differs from society to society, and societal norms determine the basis for divorce, the above-mentioned factors seem to be generic. And in Yakurr society, they are the real factors causing divorce.

Factors Responsible for the Increasing Rate of Divorce in the Society

Urbanization and industrialization are seen to exacerbate divorce rate, thus England (1981) affirmed that "divorce rates tend to rise with industrialization and urbanization." in support of this view, Enang (2003) said divorce rates are higher in urban societies than in rural villages, because in urban societies, there are wide choices of marriage partners and it is the social function of marriage which is most important than the biological function. He further observed that urban societies allowed complete sexual freedom, and that marriage agreements are not usually kept. Modo (1994) on his part stated that the increasing rate of divorce in urban societies has been the result of kin-group influences which are either absent or minimal. The point to be stressed is that kinship solidarity is loose in urban centres which would have helped in putting pressure on husbands and wives who have disagreement to remain intact rather than resort to divorce.

In Yakurr society, where we have both urban centres and rural villages, structural comparism are made to the effect that there is high and increasing rate of divorce in her urban centres than could be found in the rural areas. In the urban centre of Ugep, for example, women are as successful as men. The women are industrious and involve in contract jobs, capital intensive business, paid employment etc. This economic power at times makes the women not to tolerate their husbands. On getting divorce, they go back to their family house and become economically independent. In the study of the family in a stressful state, Hoebel and Frost (1976) observed that during periods of war, divorce rate is usually high. This is because when the men are at the battle field and the women are certainly going to be left under stressful conditions. That so many women lacked the strength to cope with such stressful condition for long and they would want to resolve it by divorce.

However, the imposition of western education and civilization on the people of Yakurr society has brought about many changes to their life patterns and to many elements that tend to aggravate mutual problems. For example, the Yakurr culture contact with Europe introduce into the area, urbanization and industrialization in some of its communities. The establishment of various denominations saw a steady erosion of the traditional values especially those that govern marriage rituals. Specifically, intertribal wars brought about by land and boundary dispute all help to aggravate the rate of divorce in the society.

In any case, the fact remains that in all societies where economic power and materialistic tendencies are highly valued, all superstructures including marriage are subject to economic consideration. When at a particular period, the economy is bad and life seems not to be easy, many homes break down, and some would come to reconciliation when the economy improves. Yakurr people are not exception in the above respects.

Effects of Divorce on the Family

Traditionally, the family has been viewed as a unit with several functions, notably legitimate sexual outlet for the partners, procreation, and socialization of children and in some case production. Horn, cited by Martins (1982), argued that divorce brings about the dysfunction of the family as most of the functions would be disrupted and ceases to be performed as they should be when marriage that holds the family is intact. For instance, in the area of socialization, what children need to develop good character is the combination of what mothers and fathers bring to the parenting equation. Take the fact that mothers tend to be nurtured and the fathers tend to be disciplinarian. Horn believed that "families socialize children best when both parents adopt a nurturing but permissive role, demonstrating high levels of love and low levels of control.

In the study of Haralambos, Holborn and Heald (2008) who defined divorce as the legal termination of a marriage identified the following consequences of divorce on the family as thus:

- (i) Loss of love, friendship and security.
- (ii) Cessation of sexual satisfaction (uxorial rights)
- (iii) Loss of adult model roles for children to follow.
- (iv) Increased work load for the remaining spouse, especially in the children.
- (v) Predisposition to a lot of health hazards; mal-nutrition, anaemia, mental illness, drug addiction, alcoholism etc.

According to the scholars, divorce is "indeed a harmful social situation that can cause family members to suffer. The children begotten in the marriage may suffer from neglect, abuse and are often the victim of child labour." In many societies for example, where polygamy is practiced, children whose mothers have been divorced, are subjected to hardship, abuse and neglect by the remaining women in the house. They may also be denied of certain benefits and privileges in the home. Moreso, because of neglect and abandonment of the child caused by the absence of the mother at home, the children are exposed to some social hazard. In addition, their chances of developing into physically, socially, psychologically and economically sound adults are jeopardized.

Enang (2003) stressed that among the Igbos, divorce brings shame and disgrace upon the bride's family who would be expected to refund the bride wealth paid on the bride's head. It is usually conceived among the Igbos as a slap on the face and a blow on the pride, ego and integrity of the family. And that is why prompt mediation is always made by family members, in order to avoid disgrace to the family. Nevertheless, when divorce occurs in any family, it threatens the survival and social functioning of family members. This is largely because divorce limits peoples' abilities and capabilities. The partners that is left behind may not only find it difficult to survive but may also not be able to overcome the effects on him or and may eventually lead to the death of the victim.

Effects of Divorce on Society

Divorce constitutes a serious social problem and affects people in both cities and villages, although its incidence and prevalence varies.

Kephart (1961) stated that divorce rates affect the society in diverse ways. Among other things, the prevalence of divorce cases in any society portrays it as a society of moral decadence. That is, society where the rules and moral expectation are easily violated at will, and is unable to control its citizenry. Divorce is also seen in most societies as an anti-social behaviour that leaves negative implication on society. A single divorce may change the whole of human existence. It starts with a particular family, and as the family is weakened by it and filled with tension, society is injured and threatened.

According to Thomas (2003), divorce is hazardous and holds very negative implications for the society. He further state that children of divorce parents do not stand good chances of developing properly and are therefore likely to develop inferiority complex, aggressiveness, anxiety etc. In extreme cases, these children may develop serious personality problems which may in turn affect their social functioning in society adversely. In recent times, Yakurr society has been bedeviled by a lot of violent criminal activities such as rape, assault, armed robbery, murder, car-theft etc. In fact, there is a general decline in moral values and attitudes. And all these could be traced to the prevalence of divorce rate in the area.

Divorce as a negative social condition work against the proper functioning of society. It hampers the general progress of society. According to Ed Rubenstein, "divorce has inter-connective links such as it can lead to poverty and poverty can cause divorce." He also noted that divorce can jeopardize social security as well as shatter the lives of members of society, and make them live in perpetual misery. As a matter of fact any society that is laden with high rates of divorce is sure to be eluded of meaningful development.

Theoretical Anchor

It will not be out of place to appreciate at the onset that a number of theories are of value in our attempt to understand the issue of divorce in society. A prominent theory that falls within this purview is the value conflict theory. The value conflict theory has its root from Karl Marx ideology that states that "the history of all hitherto known societies is the history of class and class struggle. The theory holds that society is made up of two main opposing classes, namely, the bourgeoisie class, i.e. those who own the means of production and the proletariat, i.e. the working class. Because of the dichotomies in the interest of these two groups, they constantly engage in conflict or struggle.

As a major approach in the study of divorce rates in the society, the value conflict theory views divorce as a social problem that exist as a result of the continuous tensions and conflict between competing values and interest in the home. In other words, it is the continuous conflicts and tensions between husbands and wives and/or between the family and external pressures that cause divorce in the home. From this theoretical stand point such variables as adultery, incompatibility, childlessness, separation, poverty etc are the forms and indices of conflict that

causes divorce. More so, from the point of view of this theory, divorce can leave negative and very harmful effect on the family and the society at large. One of such is the production of a tradition of bad feelings between the divorced parties, and also between the families of the divorced couples. It is also capable of throwing society into conflict as a result of criminal activities and other vices which divorce generates.

The theory also explains that conflict is generated when the extended family interferes with the consensus and cohesion of marriage. Yakurr people believed that marriage brings about the union of extended families. For this reason, marriage is not left entirely to the two people who are married. The families on both sides play an important part in the success or failure of marriages. In so many cases, such interference became an impediment in the way of the married couples who are in love with each other and who are anxious to consummate their relationship. More often than not these interferences generate conflicts that bring about the many divorce we have in Yakurr Local Government Area of Cross River State.

Methodology

The study adopts the survey research design which is seen as a mode of inquiry that combines a distinct method of data collection with a distinct form of analysis. The survey design is seen as the best method available to the social scientist who is interested in collecting original data and designing a population too large to observe directly. More so, the essence of choosing this type of design is because it is particularly well suited for the study of individual's attitudes, feelings and opinion. The study population comprises all men and women, aged 18 years and above and are resident in Yakurr Local Government Area. The sample size will involve 200 respondents, selected from men and women aged 18 years and above. The data analyzed here were obtained from 200 men and women aged, 18+.

These respondents were selected from four wards in the Local Government Area. The cluster samples were drawn from the four major communities in the L.G.A, viz Ugep, Ekorì, Nko and Mkpani. The wards were selected through the use of simple random sampling technique from the list of all the wards making up these communities. A list of all wards for each of the communities mentioned above was constructed. From each list, one ward was selected through the use of simple random sampling technique for each of the four communities. They formed the clusters from which the samples for the study were drawn. All together, four wards, namely Bikobiko in Ugep, Ajere in Ekorì, Abanankpai in Nko and Makpani in Mkpani community, produced the respondents for the study.

In each ward, fifty (50) respondents were selected for the study. These wards selected represent the characteristics and generalization of the local government area. The questionnaire will be administered through hand delivery to both men and women who are age 18 years and above under study in their homes, working places or business centres etc. by the researcher. In the process, the respondents will be aided to understand exactly what the questions mean. For the illiterates, the statements in the instrument were translated to them in the vernacular language in which case, their responses were entered in the appropriate spaces in the questionnaire. The pattern of visitation, follow-up and monitoring and also holding focus group discussions with groups like families, age-grades and associations to confirm information supplied in the questionnaire were adopted. Necessary secondary materials (review of literature) would be extracted on plain sheets. The coefficient of reliability (r) will be above 0.5 for the research instrument to be considered

reliable. Hence the test-retest method of reliability is used.

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential analysis was adopted. Descriptively, data was analyzed using tables and simple percentages.

Study Area

The people of Yakurr occupies an area positioned in the middle of Cross River Basin with a total area of one eighty-seven square miles. Its average density, which is invariably the highest among the groups in Cross River is 350 per square mile. It is flanked in the north, north east and by the Obubra people in the south and south west by the Biase people and in the west by the Cross River. Politically, they belong to the central senatorial district of the state and about 120 kilometers from Calabar, the capital of Cross River State. They are heterogenous in nature and kinship wise practice the double unilineal descent system. It is a culture area with rectangular houses surrounded. An area in which large markets are established due to their engagement in agriculture and root cropping for the sake of an economic mainstay. It is also an area with a lot of secret societies such as "obam", a masquerade that is held in high esteem mainly for brave men who are otherwise regarded as warriors. Culturally, they are known for the celebration of a festival called "Leboku" which when translated in English means "New Yam Festival." This event takes place annually and has made Yakurr society a tourist centre because it attracts a lot of foreigners who normally come to witness the festival. The Yakurr Local Government Area comprises ethnic groups located in twenty-five villages and urban towns which lives a few miles apart.

The population of Yakurr as at present has increased to an estimate of four million, eight hundred and sixty thousand, seven hundred and forty people growing at the rate of 3% per annum. The concentration of this population has made Yakurr a compact political unit and this has greatly influenced political development in the area. The people are predominantly involved in the cultivation of agricultural products such as yam, cassava, rice, cocoa, palm oil etc. Although, a lot of them are also engaged in industrial activities, administrative work, contract jobs, trading and so forth.

Male	108	54
Female	92	46
Total	200	100
18-27	59	
28-37	55	27.
38-47	47	23.
48-57	22	11.
58 and above	17	8.5
Total	200	100
Married	69	34.
Divorce	62	31.

Separated	48	24.
Single	17	8.5
Widowed	4	2
Total	200	100

No form of	59	29.
Formal education	41	20.
FSLC	33	16.
WASC/GCE/SSCE	27	13.
NCE/ND/OND	18	9.0
HND/B.Sc	17	8.5
M.Sc/Ph.D	5	2.5
Others		
Total	200	100

Farming	57	28.
Business/Trading	43	21:
Teaching/Lecturing	39	19.
Civil/Public Service	27	13.
House wife	20	10.
Unemployed	14	7.0
Total	200	100

Catholic	37	18.
Protestants	4.8	24.
Traditional Religion	62	31.
Islam	17	8.5
Others	36	18.
Total	200	100

Source: Field work, 2023.

It is the finding that Yakurr society is fraught with a high rate of divorce cases, and this is perpetuated by many variables, among which includes the culture of early age or youthful marriages among the people. This is because of the importance attached to marriage as a focus of social recognition and of existence. Hence marriage became a vicarious cycle where the youths rush in and soon rush out because of their immaturity and incompetence in marital affairs.

Urbanization and all it implies in terms of loose or absence of kingrouping and extended family, the erotic and social aspects of marriages which also lay emphasis on economic convenience of marriages etc are seen to exacerbate divorce rate in the area. This development is somewhat contrasted with what is tenable in the rural villages of Yakurr, where the norms and folkways, the double unilineal structure, the kingrouping and extended family relationship exist to protect marriages from breaking up. Hence, divorce rates are higher in urban cities of Yakurr than its rural villages.

It is also revealed that the emergence of feminists movements with its attendant attitudes and characteristics which include women liberation/emancipation, gender equality, women empowerment, working wives and the increasing affluence

and spread of materialistic attitudes have pushed divorce rates in Yakurr to an alarming proportion. This development has transformed the status of women, and make them feel they should have equal right, roles and responsibilities with men. Women now reject the culture of paternity that hitherto had been in existence and challenges the natural order of a male dominated world. Women prefer to work to earn a living than tied to the apron strings of men. Wealth and materialism is the set standard for marriages in the modern families. All these are diametrically opposed by the man in the home who would want his place as the head, to control and dominate the women, hence the conflicts and crisis that results to divorce cases in the area.

As a result of the frequencies of divorce cases in Yakurr, families have been seriously affected. This is reflected in the frequent cases of child abuse in the area. The study shows that the absence of one or both of the parents in a child's life, leads to the denial of affection, love, care and adequate and proper socialization, essential for the growth and development of the child. Children raised from broken homes are subjected to physical abuse in form of maltreatment and beating. Some become socially abused by making them to hawk with wares in the streets and are denied the rights of education and training. Some have their growth and development stunted as a result of psychological abuse, psychopathic, psycho-physiological torments in form of neurotic and psychotic problems. All these are because of the absence of the firmness and disciplinary nature of the father which is supposed to equate with the nurturing nature of the mother needed to raise a child.

Finally, the deepening crime rates such as arson, murder, advance fee fraud (419), stealing, etc that is prevalent in Yakurr society is traced to the divorce rates in the area. This crime rates makes it impossible to have a civil society and eludes it of meaningful development. The study shows clearly that a child who is to become a criminal starts from parental neglect and abandonment of the child in early home life in which the child's life is full of perverse experiences, no love, no affection and no dedication to parents, but continuous hardship, always in want, subjected to frequent changes, and suffers from frustrations. All these experiences make the child to become primarily characterized by his own aggressive behaviour, his aggressive peers and his hostile home life. His behaviour continues to deteriorate at a rapid rate as he soon joins a criminal gang that constitutes a threat to society and its development.

Conclusion

The study examines the divorce rates in Yakurr Local Government area and noted that certain determinants are responsible for the explosive trend. These include the culture of early marriage amongst the people of Yakurr, urbanization and industrialization and its consequences on the people, and the modern family attitudes and characteristics such as working wives, gender equality and feminism etc. The situation in Yakurr has reached a level, where one can easily say that "divorce" is a norm of the society or that Yakurr society is morally bankrupt. The consequence of this development is that both the family and society are adversely affected. This is reflected in the rates of child abuse and crimes waves in the society. As the divorce rate increases so does- crime increases. Indeed, the study therefore establishes that child abuse and crimes are product of broken homes and that the moral development of children is best

accomplished within the framework of intact families where there is parental equation of the father's discipline and the mother's nurturing.

Recommendations

As a panacea for divorce, the following suggestions are made:

1. The high rates of divorce are matters of behaviour. Therefore, marriages can only be secured and intact, only when couples decide to be honest, truthful, faithful and virtuous to one another. The bottom line is that Yakurr people need to be faithful to the call of the supernatural being in their lives and be ethical in their marriages. There should be a clear set of guiding values in any marriage and the choices made. That is, so many families break down because of the choice couples make and the chances they take. At least, there are some people in society who have provided living examples of the values they espouse, and they are proof that it is possible to lead a marriage life of moral integrity, regardless of economic hardship, childlessness etc. Through their consistent examples, community activists, social workers, marriage counsellors, religious leaders, etc should have the unique capacity to change not only the behaviour of the people towards marriages but also to catalyze their internal change of heart which should result to a belief system that when once they have chosen their partners, let it be until death do them part.
2. Marriages can remain intact when- maturity and long courtship before marriage is encouraged. This will give room for tolerance, understanding of each other etc. If partners are not matured, anything can set them off emotionally. Thus, Yakurr people should be encouraged to enter into marriage when they have reached the age of 35 for men and 25 for women.
3. Since religion and social pressures have for generations forced many couples to remain intact in their marriages, it is therefore proper that in a place where the kingrouping and the extended family is loose, religious fraternity, physical and social grouping like "women in Nigeria," business people's fellowships" etc should be recognized and encouraged to intervene in marital problems and to settle marital disputes.
4. A very significant observation in the study area is that parents do not charge high bride price. This is to avoid the embarrassment of not being able to repay the bride price in the event of divorce. The attitude amounts to an encouragement and a provision for divorce in any marriage affair. However, it is my candid opinion that the more the value of bride price the more effect it has in holding the marriage together. A high bride price is not quite easy to refund when divorce is sought and this fact prevents women from giving slight reasons to convince parents to dissolve their marriage. For this reason, we will therefore recommend that high bride price should be encouraged in Yakurr society.
5. In view of the fact that government agencies and policies had for decades become powerless to make men and women marry or stay married. They are powerless to guarantee intact families. In fact, government agencies often do more harm than good by enforcing policies that undermine stable families, by misdiagnosing the real causes of broken homes. And in view of the fact that the political system has not been able to change the divorce trend. If only it were that simple, the family and matrimonial acts that had been in place since the 1940's would have created the desired impact. Therefore, the government through a renewed public

policy can directly and consciously change the internal controls on which human character and ultimately human behaviour depends. They can perform this essential role by enacting a law that will make divorce illegal and for it to carry serious consequences. For example, there is no provision for divorce in Italy except for annulment by the church. Ireland has no provision for divorce and as at 1997, there are no proposal for legalizing it (Gerard O'Donnei, 1974).

6. Another possible way of reducing the rate of divorce is that in future, all couples should be selected for marriage by computer. That is, the computer will cross-reference those traits in the male partner and the female partner that may make successful marriage, and to do the same with those traits that make marriage dissolve.
7. It is also recommended that for divorce rate to be controlled, enough sensitization and re-conscientization campaigns using both traditional and modern means of communication should be carried out in Yakurr, at least, to make them to be conscious of the fact that paternal and maternal affection and their presence in child's life are among the critical elements required in raising well-behaved children.
8. Finally, it is my suggestion that all marriages irrespective of the circumstances should be built on real love. According to Arthur Gordon (1997) "real love is caring as much about the welfare and happiness of your marriage partner as about your own." Real love is not possessive or jealous; it is liberating; it sets you free to become your best self. Real love is not total absorption in each other; it is looking outwards in the same direction - together. Love makes burdens lighter, because you divide them. It makes joys more intense, because you share them. It makes you stronger, so that you can reach out and become involved with life in ways you have not risk alone.

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