

PSYCHO-SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF DIVORCE AND SINGLE-PARENTHOOD ON SOME NIGERIAN WOMEN

Akinlotan, Raymond Adeniyi

Department of Sociology
Crawford University, Igbesa, Ogun State
raysoclasu@yahoo.com

Kesinro, Olalekan Rasheed

Department of Management Administration
Crawford University, Igbesa, Ogun State
romarke07@yahoo.com

and

Abisoye, O.Amos

Department of Sociology
Crawford University, Igbesa, Ogun State

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the well-being of female divorcees and single-parents both psychologically and socially. There was an attempt to compare both variables, i.e. the differences or likeness in divorce and single-motherhood. The findings of this study will expose the horrors and dangers associated with divorce for the divorced women and single-mothers. It will further throw light into the agonies of divorce and act as deterrent to potential divorcees and single-mothers. The findings will no doubt form empirical evidences for marital counseling. Sample size of eighty (80) participants was purposively selected from two major cities in Nigeria (Lagos and Ibadan). The instrument for data collection was the D. and S. self-rating scale for measuring self-concept, social-interaction; depression level; and child-caring pattern. It was constructed and validated by the researchers under guidance of experienced psycho-metricians in the areas. Pertinent suggestions were made for further research and the generalizability of these findings highlighted. In conclusion, the paper examined the role adjustment necessary to the functioning of a household by comparing involvement in specific tasks before separation and after becoming single parents. These tasks included meal preparation,

dishwashing, laundry, ironing, grocery shopping, and house cleaning. It was set to find how the single-parent fathers were able to carry out these home-making activities.

Key words: *divorce; psycho-social; single-parenthood; Nigerian women*

Introduction

Every culture and religion believes that marriage is the exchange of consents between a man and a woman to compliment each other's efforts in life. It is obvious, therefore, that where there is a breach in this act of complimenting one another's efforts, some social and psychological impacts are felt by the former members of the union.

Oppong (1980) has grouped the roles of women into seven categories, namely, mother, worker or producer outside the home, worker or producer inside the home (goods and services), wife, kinswoman, community member, and individual woman. These roles or the degree of their performance vary among cultures and from time to time even within the same culture. Women in many societies were regarded as their husbands' property and hence it was unethical for them to aspire too much (Nwankwo, 1996). They as "property" could not own property. The concept was very prevalent in Nigeria and is still fairly strong in some part of the country.

Oyekanmi (1990) opines that biological characteristics do not bar women from particular occupations rather; the mother role is the cultural constraint and a validating myth for the "domestic oppression of women". For instance, in African society, the popular belief is that men are superior to women. Women are brought up in a conventional way and they in turn bring up children in the same way. Until recently, the male child was believed to be more beneficial to the family consequently; there is preference for male education. One can argue that, since women are the major agents of socialization, they should partly be blamed for their predicament since it seems they have either explicitly or implicitly supported the cultural arrangement of roles and the value attached to them.

Divorce which could be seen as an aberration in marriage or a disruption in the life of a married individual has become a regular occurrence among Nigerians of every tribe and status. Despite some religious tenets which encourage or partially condone the dissolubility of the union, it has been empirically found out that the aftermath of divorce is not so

comfortable for the members involved. Divorce has become a phenomenon which is currently receiving an increased attention as a stress-inducing life crisis that affects a great number of Nigerians annually. There is no evidence to show that there has been fluctuations in the divorce rate in the country when one compares the situation now to what it used to be about 20 to 25 years ago. There is a clear evidence to substantiate the negative impact of divorce which is getting more acute, not just on the members but largely on the country as a whole.

In some divorce cases, it has been found that the children stay with the mothers in most cases. In this type of a post-divorce state, the role of the father in the socialization of children which is of a particular interest, since he is ordinarily the only adult male with whom the child can have stable, daily interaction. Most theories of socialization postulate that from this interaction the child internalizes the male role, either directly in the case of a boy or as a counter role, in the case of a girl. The absence of paternal care has long term effects on the child. Also, clinical reports indicate that the absence of a father is believed to be a major factor in some problems of personal adjustment in children (Bloom et al., 1978).

It has been psychologically and socially established that women are more able to cope with the house chore routines than men in divorce because of the sex-type but coping in the inter-personal relationship is more outlandish on the part of men than in women divorcees. Apart from the monogamous and polygamous family set-ups, Nigeria is gradually inculcating into her culture the idea of single-parenthood or what some call parents without partners. In fact, discussing about single-parenthood could bring not only a biological but also a monstrous controversy on the possibility of such a term. It is basic that coitus must have taken place between a man and a woman before a child could be given birth to, why and how then could there be a child of a single-parent? Well, we are neither in the laboratory nor in the science referendum. So, little should our worries be over such questions. If the members of the divorce state could be said to have both social and psychological problems confronting them it is obvious that members of single-parenthood would be beset by more complex problems (Freud, 1925).

In preventing early psychological disorders, Anthony (1974) predicted that children who lose a parent through separation, divorce, or desertion will be vulnerable to acute psychiatric disturbance during both childhood and adult life; to avoidance of marriage, to divorce and to various

psychiatric disorders. Lynn (1974: 279) asserted that, "*The research on the relationship between father absence and the general level of the child's adjustment reveals that the loss of a father for any reason is associated with poor adjustment, but that absence because of separation, divorce, or desertion may have especially adverse effects*". These statements suggest that children reared by one parent, particularly children reared by a non-widowed single parent, are at psychological risk and that the reason for their risky status is the number of parents heading their families and the cause of parent absence. Freud (1915; 1921; 1923; and 1925) assumed that child rearing by one parent is a risk for maladjustment regardless of the cause of single parenthood. For the presence of a mother and a father during childhood is a minimum necessity for appropriate sex-typed identification and normal child development.

The rate with which divorce and single-parenthood are styled in social life, is gathering momentum in this country, there is fear that the whole social fabric on which the family is based will soon corrode and eventually collapse. When one remembers that marriage prepares the home and family, and that the family is the basic unit of any society, one will quickly realize the danger posed to the whole society and the nation by divorce and single-parenthood style of child-upbringing.

Theoretical Conceptualization

Divorce

In his book *Marriage and Morals*, Russell (1976) opined that divorce as an institution has been permitted in most ages and countries for certain causes. He went further to explain the permission is never intended to produce an alternative to monogamy family, but merely to mitigate hardship where, for special reasons, the continuance of a marriage was felt to be intolerable. Despite this view of Bertrand Russell, it should be noted that the law permitting divorce has been extraordinarily different in different ages, places and even religions and varies at the present day, even within the same country.

In Nigeria for example, the Mosaic Law, for the Christians, allows a husband to give a bill of divorcement (*Deut. 24'*) whilst, the non-Christians believe that divorce is allowed provided the property which the wife brought into marriage was restored, and the bride-price returned. The Catholic Church, on the ground that marriage is a Sacrament does not allow divorce for any purpose whatsoever, but upholds it indissolubility. (*Code of Canon*

law, 11-11). Conway in Hillman (1975) showed that the legislators in the various countries while trying to make customary divorce proceedings available at the level of the local magistrate or district commissioner have also tried to prevent divorces being obtained too easily. If Brendan Conway could submit that there is an attempt to prevent divorces being obtained too easily by both the legislators and commissioners, it must have been that these bodies are aware of the extent of the impact of divorce on the individual and on the society. Therefore, people should increase their interest in ways of controlling and minimizing the disruptive experiences of the divorced.

Nigerians, like other Africans, hold the conviction that marriage is a contract between two families and, therefore, that consanguinal and affinal kins are equally likely to be seen as one's marriage remains intact. Each individual serves as a pivotal connecting link between his or her kindred or his or her spouse. Schneider, (1970), Farber, (1973) were of the opinion that when representatives of a kindred are seen, they are seen either by both husband and wife or by the spouse for whom these relatives are kindred". Therefore, according to Rosenberg & Anspach (1973) imbalance which occur in the kin networks of married couples result from one of the spouses' inability or unwillingness to maintain a link with representatives of his or her kindred, a situation referred to by Farber (1966) as 'asymmetrical kinship'.

The effect on children of alterations in kinship networks resulting from divorce and re-marriage have not been fully explored. From an analytical point of view, Fox (1967: 167) expressed that there are different and far more complex meaning for dependent children than their parents. For the child, relatives of both resident mother and absent father are consanguines. These relatives comprise the child's kindred and thus legally and morally have some duties and claims towards him or her. If imbalances in the kin networks of the mother result it in imbalances in child's kin network, a particular kind of stress can result (Farber, 1966). The child grows up in a kinship universe which is over-sided because interaction and support may occur with only the material half of his kindred. Socio-emotional supports and resources from his paternal kindred are then potentially lost.

In the dictionary of Moral Theology, published in 1962 by Burns & Oates, divorce is understood to be the faculty given by a civil magistrate to married persons to separate and enter on a new marriage. Here, we would see that two steps are been taken at the same time. The first is the dissolution of

an existing marriage and the second is the right for the individuals to go into another union. Here, the idea of re-marriage has been stressed.

The dictionary went further to say that once divorce is introduced as a remedy in special cases such as life imprisonment, incurable disease of the consort, or because of adultery, it cannot be restrained. "*It extends and increases so that it profoundly affects the stability of the institution of marriage, the security and the peace of home, and causes incalculable damage, particularly to the wife and the children*".

Generally speaking in Nigeria, either the husband or the wife can start a separation or divorce. In most cases, separation still leaves room for settlement but divorce may mean a break-off of the marriage. The New Catholic Encyclopedia (1966) has it that, where divorce is permitted, only the men are permitted to divorce for their own reasons among the primitive (people) societies. In the Encyclopedia International, divorce is seen as an age-old phenomenon dating back to the Semitic people who were governed by the Babylonia Code of Hammurabic, 1750 B. C. In this code it is the prerogative of the man to repudiate his wife at will, and allowed a woman to initiate divorce, in which cases, her husband could divorce her without alimony.

Among the ancient Hebrews, Greeks and Romans; divorce was generally a privilege accorded the husband, rather than, as today a legal prerogative of both sexes. This privilege must have been based on the Mosaic Law in *Deut 23¹⁻⁴*. In this passage, the law allows the husband to repudiate his wife if something 'indecent' is found in her. The wife was not able to divorce her husband. The husband simply gave his wife a public statement of dismissal. This bill of divorce was a written document to be shown as proof of the divorce and freedom to marry another (*Deut 24¹, Is. 50¹, Jer. 3⁸*). The divorced woman returned to her house (*Lev. 22¹³*) and could be given again in marriage.

This practice that is based on the prerogative of the man also permits re-marriage. This customary right was also practiced among the Arabians until the time of Mohammed (570-632) and of course polygamous marriage was accepted. Neither the Jews nor the Arabs recognized the right of divorce for women, although under certain condition a wife could bring suit for dissolution of her marriage. Since the Nigerian families are being peopled with adherents of both the Jewish and Arabian faiths, the submission above holds truthfully for them in their belief and practice as far as divorce is concerned.

In the declaration of consents at weddings both at the civil and church registries, the bride and the bridegroom pledged "to have and to hold, to love and cherish, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us part". One that is totally new and ignorant of the family set up in Nigeria, like in any other country of the world, may be carried away, that after all these words have been said and supposedly meant, there could be no cause at all to disrupt or put an end to the union of the spouses. But where there is a divorce, one may want to know what could be the possible causes for this.

Everywhere, the reasons for marital breakdown are similar. On the man's side it is personal incompatibility, wife's infidelity, desertion, laziness, drunkenness or illness. On the side of the woman it is personal incompatibility, husband's drunkenness, violence, infidelity, desertion or refusal to support. Also, Shorter (1977) includes the failure to have children which according to him plays a very small role among the motives for divorce. In the urban situation, he went on to say that, tensions are created by the greater independence of the women. This women independence is without doubt in conjunction with their relatively greater access to employment which places them on the same cadre if not higher ones with their husbands. No wonder then that Rainwater (1966) asserted that it has been said that the marginal economic position of male, in conjunction with the relatively greater access of the female to employment, make family disruption a frequent occurrence in the low income home.

In Nigeria, according to Akinbami (1988) the basic reasons for which divorce could be granted in the law court are; adultery, desertion for a period of at least seven years, cruelty. There are other reasons for which people seek divorce, but, the law courts are either silent on these or advice the parties to seek a domiciliary resolution.

Since the Nigerian culture is Kin-Knitted, one should be interested in the impact of divorce on the members' kinship. Research evidence on the kin ties of divorced people is not extensive but provides some insight into the dynamics involved. Differences in the kin networks of divorced and married women were reported by Rosenberg and Anspach (1973). They found that while married women achieved parity in contacts with their own and spouse's kindred, divorced women did not contact their former spouse's relatives as frequently as their own. These studies show that the relatives of the ex-husband are generally unlikely to be seen and cannot be relied upon for aid or help unless the ex-husband intervenes. However, they do not show

whether the residents spouse's kindred compensate for this loss of contact and potential help and do not indicate whether differences in the child's relationship with paternal and maternal kindred result.

Waller Stein and Kelley (1980) and Chiriboga, (1982) have argued that man may be more negatively affected by divorce than are women, because they are less apt to be aware of marital problems far in advance of the divorce and because they tend to lack intimate relationship other than a spouse. On the other hand, women may ultimately be more negatively affected, because they are less likely to return to pre-divorce economic levels, and they usually assume custody of minor children. After directly including the effects of current economic circumstances, perceived deterioration in standard of living and currently available confidants, however, there was no main effect of gender nor was there a significant difference by gender in the impact of divorce.

Goode (1956) found that the types of marital complaints that divorced women made varied by social class, length of marriage, and rural-urban origin. Levinger (1966) corroborated the presence of social class differences in a study of the complaints divorcing couples with minor children gave to marriage counselors during court required pre-divorce interviews. He found that lower class respondents were more likely to mention failure to perform instrumental family task because of inadequate financial resources, excessive drinking, and physical abuse. In the middle class, the problems mentioned focused less on tasks and more of affective relationships such as complaint of lack of love, fidelity, and excessive demands. He also found that women made more complaints than men and were 'more likely to complain of "mental cruelty". Men, while also mentioning lack of love and neglect, were more likely to complain about in-law problems or sexual incompatibility. Both Winch (1971) and Weiss (1975) postulated that partners who feel 'responsible' for ending a marriage because they are no longer able to bear the spouse's failings (alcoholism, mental illness), feel guilty and remorseful. These feelings in turn may manifest themselves in symptoms of health disturbance. Weiss (1975) suggested that the complaint which is probably the most devastating in its impact on the individual's sense of self-worth is discovering that the spouse has been unfaithful.

The problems and stresses encountered by the divorced according to Hetherington et al (1976) and Berman, (1979) fall roughly into three major categories: pragmatic concerns, inter-personal and social problems, and

family-related issues. In the area of pragmatic issues, both men Hetherington et al. (1976) and women, Yates, (1976) encounter difficulties in such areas as home repair and maintenance, work efficiency and performance, household organization, and finances. Moreover, divorced people express a general feeling of being overwhelmed, and not having enough time to do everything, and of not knowing what to do or how to do it.

The interpersonal-social sphere is the second major area of disruption for divorced people. Goode (1956) noted that, although old friends are initially supportive and helpful, they rapidly place themselves at a distance often as a result of conflicting loyalties to the two former spouses. Goode also reports a reduction in the number of people – especially men – who are willing to be involved with divorced women with children.

Both Brendwan et al., (1974) and Miller (1970) described a number of attitudes that develop among friends of the divorced person, including ambivalence regarding the divorce, sexual attraction to the divorced person, stereotypes of the divorced woman, and an unconscious fear in couples that the same process will happen to them. Divorced individuals themselves have both attitudes and feelings regarding interpersonal involvements. Both the fear of involvement in another long-term relationship, and a case of vulnerability influences the level of social activity for many divorced individuals (Bohannon, 19970; Weiss, 1975; Brown, 1976).

Family interactions comprise the third major problems domain contributing to post-divorce distress. The prolonged, negatively toned contact between the spouses proceeding, during, and following the divorce often interferes with effective adaptation. Hetherington et al., (1976) and Weiss (1976), described the continued attachment and conflictual involvement of the former spouses. It has also been reported that regular child-rearing practices and communication become disrupted during a divorce (Hetherington et al., 1976, Kessel & Dertsch, 1977). Problems in this later aspect of the family area are exacerbated when children, especially male children, become more resistant and less compliant with the custodial parent (Mendes, 1976).

During the first year following a divorce, (Hetherington 1976; Mendes, 1976) both men and women report low self-esteem, confusion concerning social and sexual roles, and feelings of anger, anxiety, ambivalence, and depression. Men report a lack of both structure and coherent personal identity, and feeling of ruthlessness, guilt and loss. Women report feeling unattractive, helpless, and personally and socially incompetent (Hetherington, 1977).

Some anthropologists have carried out some research or studies to see how female status can be an implicit variable for divorce. Three studies carried out in Nigeria by Cohen (1961), Lloyd (1968) and Netting (1969). Netting (1969) reported on three Kofyar villages where 44 percent of the women have experienced divorce. Netting attributes this divorce rate to the economic independence of women. Women have several sources of income, and while they may make less than men, their money is often tied up in houses, land and other obligations. "Men are often reduced to borrowing cash from women" (Netting, 1969). Similarly, Cohen (1961) pointed out that Kanuri women have considerable autonomy from their husbands in spite of patriarchal ideas, and suggests that this defacto autonomy, makes divorce more likely. Lloyd (1968) described Yoruba women as being somewhat independent from their husbands because of the maintenance of ties to their natal kin groups, and points out that a woman's status increases as she grows older. These factors create unusually high divorce after long and fertile marriages.

Single-Parenthood

According to Burns and Oates (1962) a parent is one who begets or brings forth offspring, whether as mother or father. The upsurge of divorce, one parenthood and never married parents has caused alarm among some social scientists and policy makers who contend that the nuclear family is the fundamental building block of all human societies (Fox, 1967, La Barre, 1954) or is at the very least, ideally suited to meet the demands of modern industrial societies (Goode, 1963, Parsons, 1955). The decline of traditional nuclear family is viewed as the cause of much childhood discontent, juvenile delinquency, neurosis, and a wide range of social problems (Glueck & Glueck, 1950; Wallerstein & Kelley, 1976).

It has been established that marital conflict and unhappiness rather than marital dissolution or living in single-parent families may have the more adverse effect upon youngsters (Feldman & Feldman, (1975), Raschke & Raschke, 1979). The one- parent family is not more detrimental to the well being of children than other family forms and divorce and separation of the conjugal pair can leave their children unscathed (Bilge & Kaufman, 1983).

Single-parent house-holds occur among many peoples in varying frequencies. They are in no way, "pathological" or "incomplete", but are generated by situational contingencies to which the individuals involved must adapt. If such house-holds are encountered in large numbers within a

society or in one of its segments, the type can be assumed to be an adaptation to regularly occurring social conditions (Adams, 1960; Blumberg & Garcia, 1977). Since men are destined to adjust to situations as they are being confronted, it would be out of place to think that if the situational contingencies lay their hands on Nigerians, that they would not adapt. This is to say that it is the situation within the Nigerian society that has hurled on her citizens the idea of single-parenthood.

Since the Nigerian culture is couple-oriented, one is tempted to ask how the 'singles' are able to cope. It is conventional to think that singles are lonely and that they are 'swingers', i.e., sexually non-exclusive. Thus, Deegan (1969) noted that singleness implies one who is lacking a partner, is not complete, and is alone whereas the sexually non-exclusive life-style image implies casual sexual encounters rather than sex on a romantic love basis (Stein, 1976). These ideas imply that singles are lonelier and more sexually casual than marrieds, i.e. singles, because they have no mates, are lonely and in not being legally restricted to one mate via marriage, have encounters with many sexual partners (Leonard Cargar, 1981). Thus, in ("Games singles play" 1973) it is believed that "it's better to be surrounded by people you don't want to talk to – than to drink alone in your apartment". The implication is that anything is better than remaining at home alone night after night. (There seems to be an exaggeration since most people-single or married – do not go out socially very often per week or go with a member of the opposite sex when they do go out).

Historically, death was the major cause of mother-absence in the home. Today, other factors are contributing to a greater incidence of mother-absent families (Burgess, 1970; George & Wilding, 1972). These include divorce, desertion and to a lesser degree, adoption by single males (Orthner et al., 1976). Of these causes, divorce is the greatest single contributor to the constantly increasing number of all single-parent families (Burgess, 1970). Similarly, divorce is the leading contributor to the increase in single-parent families headed by a male (Smith, 1981). But, Akinbami (1988) is of the view that most middle and upper class single-parent families headed by males in Nigeria have as the main or leading contributor, the idea or 'mistake' of having casual sexual relationship with females who are socially or academically inferior just to satisfy a temporary sexual urge but eventually resulted into pregnancies. In this case, the men think that the social or educational incompatibility between them and the women would be degrading to their prestige and positions in the society. Therefore, to avoid

this shame and save their names, the best they could do was to accept the children but not to be married to the women.

In conjunction with the increasing incidence of divorce in our society, the incidence of fathers obtaining custody of children is increasing (Mendes, 1976). In the past, custody of the children was invariably awarded to the mother (Benedek & Benedek, 1972, Brown & Feldberg, 1979). If the father desired to obtain the children, he had to prove that mother was unsuitable for the task of caring for the children (Weiss, 1979). Such bias in the court is slowly giving way, and the emphasis is now beginning to shift to the best interest of the children and is not based solely on the assumption that a child must have a mother present for proper development (Weiss, 1975; Orthner & Lewis, 1979).

The changing roles of men in today's society are providing men with a greater opportunity to interact with their children. (Lynn, 1974). With such a social change, there may be confusion in regard to role expectations, and the single-parent father is often left without clear guidelines for performing the new role he has accepted (Mandes, 1976). Males within our culture have little opportunity to develop the parenting skills that will aid them in being effective parents and, consequently, provide good sex-role models for their children (Nash, 1965). The Socialization of the masculine role, in the past, has even made it unacceptable for young males to be nurturant and empathetic (Josselyn, 1965).

In their review, Herzog & Sudia (1971) concluded that there was little reliable evidence to support the charge that being reared in a mother-headed family is detrimental to the child.

In their studies of juvenile delinquency, they found that family quality, harmony, or climate have a stronger relationship with juvenile delinquency than father absence per se. Related to this, they found that discord and conflict in the two-parent home can be more detrimental to the child than father absence in a one-parent home. In general, Herzog and Sudia (1971) feel it is the functioning of the remaining family members in single-parent families that is crucial. This functioning is often negatively affected by socioeconomic status and other environmental factors.

Nye (1957) is of the opinion that adolescents from broken and happy or unhappy, unbroken homes could adjust in the same way as children from conflicted two-parent families and reconstituted and one single-parent families in the areas of psychosomatic illness, delinquent behavior, and parent-child adjustment. Landis (1960) opined that the degree of divorce

related trauma experienced by adolescents who could remember their parents' divorce was greater for those who saw their homes as characterized by open conflict between their parents prior to the divorce.

In her own contribution, Menaghan, (1986) is of the view that to understand changes in wellbeing or otherwise of a single-parent family, it is better to have some knowledge about the set up of the family prior to divorce or single hood and then compare this to the post events in the individual's life. The specific conditions that are most important to examine depend on the characteristics of the particular life event. Menaghan added further that, *"Divorce has been repeatedly conceptualized in terms of multiple losses – loss of a valued social role, loss of an intimate relationship, loss of an adult household member, Loss of a source of income and or unpaid services, and often loss of a familiar residence and regular daily contact with one's children"*.

The sour aspect of single-parenthood could be summed up in the words of Liebow (1967) who researched into black street corner men. Liebow said *"Sometimes he sits down and cries at the humiliation of it all. Sometimes he strikes out at her or the children with his fists, perhaps to lay hollow claim to being man of the house in the one way left open to him, or perhaps simply to inflict pain on this woman who bears witness to his failure as a husband and father and therefore, as a man. Increasingly, he turns to the street corner where a shadow system of values constructed out of public fictions serves to accommodate just such men as he, permitting them to be men once again provided they do not look closely at one another's credentials"*.

In Nigeria and in contrast to the view expressed by Akinbami (1988) single parenthood involves more women than men. These women are young, well educated and literate – making a decision not to marry, but to have children (Ezekiel, 1987).

In a survey conducted by quality magazine, various reasons have been given by women in this new trend or concept of family in Nigeria. This influx of many more women into high paying careers, made their tendency, to want to get married by all means to mane, more so, when in most cases, their married friends have no merry tales to tell. This, unmarried friends of married women quickly learnt from friends sour example and took to their heels. They however, craved the fulfillment of a child. So, they picked men of their choice to father their children.

There are other Nigerian women who have made a deliberate resolution not to get married again because of an early marriage that left lasting sores. According to Ezekiel (1987) there is always an urge for every woman to have a child. This urge is more pronounced and disturbing at the age of 30 years. No wonder, then, that the average age of the single-mothers in Nigeria is put between 30 and 35 years.

Orthner, et al., (1976) noted that the single-parent father's situation is unique and requires special attention and compensating services, because single-parent fathers are usually employed, most arranged with daycare centers and nurseries for pre-school children. Children didn't present problems for most single fathers. After-school care varied, ranging from a fulltime housekeeper to no supervision; children over nine generally were on their own after school until their father came home. Night-time children were minimal. Most fathers reported taking children with them shopping, on errands and sometimes even dating. Babysitters, Friends, and relatives provided child care. Single fathers could count on relatives for short and temporary situations, but, fathers didn't rely on them very much. When family problems arose though, fathers went to relatives first (Orthner et al., 1976).

Method and Procedure

Research Design

This is a survey research designed to examine the psychological and social impact of divorce and single-parenthood on some Nigerian women. The target areas for this survey are the cities of Ibadan and Lagos respectively. Ibadan has been chosen because of its vast population and being the largest city in Nigeria. It is also a commercial center where nearly all the ethnic groups in the country are represented.

The choice of Lagos has been judged from the fact of her position as the federal capital city of heterogeneous capacity. Therefore, the women in these cities who are representatives of the major ethnic groups in the country will ensure the generalisability of the findings.

Participants

Since the study is focused on females, the survey research drew on a sample of eighty (80) women randomly selected from two major commercial and industrial cities in the country. The cities, Ibadan and Lagos have been chosen because of their relevance to the study as state capitals and also for

being populated by people from all works of life and all ethnic groups in the country. Out of the eighty (80) respondents, forty (40) are from Ibadan whilst the other forty (40) are from Lagos. A breakdown of respondents from Ibadan who were forty (40) had ten (10) as divorced women and thirty (30) as single-mothers. Out of the forty (40) respondents from Lagos, thirty (30) were divorced women whilst ten (10) fall into the group of single-mothers.

The randomly constructed survey research had forty (40) divorced women and forty (40) single-mothers on the whole. The ages of divorced participants are between 39 and 53 years with the mean age of 49.4 years. The age ranges of the single-mothers are 18 years and 69 years with the mean age of 42.9 years.

The Instrument

The instrument used was Divorce and Single-Mother, Self-Rating Scale. It was constructed and validated by the researcher. In constructing the scale, some statements were adapted from the A.P.D.I. self-concept scale of J.O. Akinboye (1977). The questionnaire was based on four-point-rating-scale asking the respondents to rate their answers on: Seldom or never; Sometimes; Often; Very often or always.

The researcher generated about one-hundred (100) items reflecting self-concept; social interaction; level of depression; and child-caring patterns. Out of the hundred initially generated items, the researcher pruned it down later to sixty (60) items.

There were four sections in the questionnaire with fifteen statements in each section. The questionnaire was grouped into section: Self-concept; Social interaction; Level of depression.

Child-caring: Both sections 'A' and 'C' were meant to bring out the psychological impact of divorce and single-motherhood on the respondents whilst sections 'B' and 'D' were to pin-point their social convenience or otherwise, as single-mothers and divorcees.

In fact, prior to the generation of the statements of the questionnaire, the researcher had studied a great deal of psycho-social data inventories and scales and he had sought advice from experienced Researchers as regard areas which the items should cover to make for wide coverage and better information necessary to test the stated hypotheses.

Validity.

The questionnaire being generated for this study has good face validity. The way and manner the items were generated and rigorously scrutinized, itemized and logically presented convinced one beyond any reasonable doubt and the reliability level of 0.09 confirms it.

Reliability

The population samples that were randomly selected from both Ibadan and Lagos have their mean age at 46.5 years. The cities were chosen because they represent a cluster of the country where all the ethnic groups are present and they also serve as 'shelter' for both the divorced and single-mothers many of whom have left the villages because of the negative spell cast on them whilst others, especially, feel better to fend for themselves and their children. Since the survey research is focused on the female divorcees and single-parents, the generalisability and reliability of the research is controlled by homogeneity.

Procedure

Since the survey research is based on divorced and single-mothers (widows and unmarried) the captive samples were randomly selected within the two great cities of Ibadan and Lagos. After the selection of these cities, the researcher took pain to shuffle between Ibadan and Lagos. Religious leaders in both the churches and the mosques were used in identifying the target population.

After identifying his subjects, the designed questionnaire was given to the respondents to be completed unaided in fairness with utmost sincerity. It took between one to five days for the respondents to return the completed questionnaire, some were even returned by post. Out of one hundred and ten (160) copies given out, only eighty (80) were duly returned and adequately completed. The questionnaire was designed in order to know the psycho-social impact of divorce and single parenthood on some Nigerian women. Four different sections containing fifteen statements each were rated on a four-point scale ranging from; never, sometimes; often; to very often or always.

Scoring

The instrument was scored manually. Each item yielded a maximum score of four; and a minimum of one. For the items made of desirable

statements in section A, B, and D of the questionnaire, scoring was done directly as weighed e.g. a rating of 4 means 4; but items of undesirable statements were reversed at scoring e.g. a rating of 4 was recorded as 1. Here also, the higher the score, the more desirable. For section C which deals with the statements on level of depression, the scoring of desirable statements was reversed, while the undesirable statements carry same score as they weighed.

In section C, the lower the score, the more desirable. The sections were scored separately to generate scores for each of the four variables being observed.

Analysis of Data

The Divorced and Single-Parenthood Rating Scale used in this survey research consists of four sections – A to D. Each of the sections contains statements that are indicators of the four main variables tested in the study. With the exception of section C, the higher the score obtained by a respondent, the more psychologically adjusted the individual is in the area of self-concept, social interaction and child-caring. Whereas, in section C, the lower the score obtained by the respondent, the more psychologically adaptive the individual is expected to be. This is because, the lower the score obtained the lower the level of depression the individual experiences. The variables observed in the groups were analyzed using t-test in comparing the differences between the means of the two samples involved in each hypothesis.

The scores will be computed for the mean, standard deviation, coefficient of correlation (r) (Pearson Product Moment) given by this formula:

$$r = \frac{N\sum XY - (\sum X)(\sum Y)}{[N\sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2][N\sum Y^2 - (\sum Y)^2]}$$

$$\text{Coefficient determination} = (r^2)$$

The computed (r) will be subjected to the test for the significance of (r) using Linton Freeman's statistical table for significance of (r).

Table I: Difference between the self-concept of Divorced women and single-mothers

VARIABLES	GROUP I			GROUP II			t	p
	DIVORCE WOMEN			SINGLE-MOTHERS				
	N	X	S.D.	N	X	S.D.		
SELF-CONCEPT	40	45.40	9.47	40	43.25	8.38	1.08	NS

Table II: Difference between the Depression Level of The Divorced Women and Single-Mothers

VARIABLES	GROUP I			GROUP II			t	p
	DIVORCE WOMEN			SINGLE-MOTHERS				
	N	X	S.D.	N	X	S.D.		
DEPRESSION LEVEL	40	36.5	11.02	40	38.6	10.88	0.94	NS

Table III: Difference between the child-caring Patterns of divorced women and single-mothers

VARIABLES	GROUP I			GROUP II			t	p
	DIVORCE WOMEN			SINGLE-MOTHERS				
	N	X	S.D.	N	X	S.D.		
CHILD-CARING PATTERNS	40	38.5	7.86	40	37	7.33	0.89	NS

Table IV: Difference between the social-interaction patterns of divorced women and single-mothers

Women and single mothers									
		GROUP I			GROUP II				
VARIABLES		DIVORCE WOMEN			SINGLE-MOTHERS			t	p
	N	X	S.D.	N	X	S.D.			
SOCIAL-INTER-ACTION PATTERNS		40	39.4	9.34	40	34.6	9.44	2.26	<.01

Results and Conclusion

The first hypothesis tested stated that there is no significant difference between the self-concept of divorced women and single-mothers. The hypothesis whose etiology is in self-concept was tested with the student t-test. After subjecting the scores of both groups i.e. the divorced and single-mothers, to t-test analysis, it was discovered that the difference between their self-concept indicates no statistical significance. The hypothesis is therefore, accepted. It was clearly revealed that there is no significant difference in the self-concept of both divorced and single-parent women. Hence, the stated

hypothesis has been confirmed. So, the hypothesis should not be rejected but rather accepted.

To test the second hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference between the depression level of divorced women and single-mothers, the data collected from this study were subjected to the student t-test and it was discovered that there is no significant difference between the depression level of the divorced women and the single-mothers. The hypothesis is, therefore, accepted. The result clearly declared that there is no significant difference in the level of depression of both divorce and single-parent women. Hence, the stated hypothesis has been confirmed and the hypothesis therefore, should be accepted.

The third hypothesis states that there is no significant difference between the child-caring patterns of divorced women and single-mothers. To test this hypothesis, the data collected were scored and analyzed by subjecting them to the student t-test and it was discovered that there is no significant difference between the child-caring patterns of divorced women and single-mothers. The null hypothesis is therefore, accepted.

In testing the fourth hypothesis which states that, there is no significant difference between the social-interaction pattern of divorced and single-parent women. The hypothesis whose aetiology is in social-interaction was tested with the student t-test. After subjecting the data collected from this study to t-test analysis, it was discovered that there is a difference between the social-interaction patterns of divorced women and the single-mothers. Therefore, since the findings negate the null hypothesis, it is obvious to reject the stated hypothesis.

Summary of Findings

From the findings of this survey research study the following conclusions could be drawn:

- (i) That the self-concept of divorced women is the same as that of single-mothers.
- (ii) That both divorced and single-mothers have the same level of stress and depression.
- (iii) That the child-caring patterns of divorced women are the same with those of single-mothers.
- (iv) That there is a difference in the social-interaction patterns of divorced women and single-mothers. This difference in their social-interaction patterns could be viewed from the fact that:

- (a) The divorced women were never prepared for their status and therefore, she feels shy and ashamed to interact with others, whilst the single-mother voluntarily chose the status and in fact to justify her status, she has to be a socialite.
- (b) The Nigerian society does not see both the divorced and the single-mothers as responsible women. So, there is a sort of negative spell cast on both groups. There is the possibility that men are more interested in the single-mothers but the fact remains that they are 'used' but not loved.
- (c) The intact families are not so opened to welcome divorced women for the fear that they (divorced) might influence the wife or snatch the husband.

In general, Nigerians are still slow in identifying with divorced women for they believe that the friend that one keeps directly or indirectly tell on his personality and integrity. Above all, it is generally believed by Nigerians that once a divorcee always a divorcee.

Implications of the study

Until it is proved otherwise, both theoretical and empirical evidences are of the opinion that intact family set-up is better than one-parent type of family since one enjoys convenience than inconvenience this survey research study has come to inform the Nigerian women that it is more devastating and stigmatizing to be a single-mother.

Since the study revealed that marital disruption and single-parenthood have an enormous psychological and social negative impact, it is worthwhile for counselors, social workers and psychologists to strive to equip themselves on how to counsel and cope with couples to-be and the wedded on how to keep intact the families they are about to set-up or are already in. The present legal step of not granting an automatic dissolution to a marriage at the request of a partner is welcomed, but the legal practitioners could make it their duty to seek means of resolving the grievances or misunderstandings of couples during the reconciliatory period and be sure that all available means are exhausted. The implication of this study for the clergymen is for them to give pre-marital counseling on marriage encounter and should endeavour to base their sermons, on the convenience and peace in intact family.

Finally, for the couple to be, it would be worthwhile to experience a considerable length of courtship period to get them acquainted with each other. It would be proper for them too to seek advice from seniors experienced in marital adjustment.

In addition to considering ways of ameliorating some of the negative consequences of single-motherhood, all of us need to increase our efforts on the preventive side- that is: we all in general need to do more to discourage early unplanned births. This would entail expanding family planning services and quality reproductive health education programmes to teenagers of both sexes, and providing better alternatives to early parenthood for example, good jobs that young person might have some hope of attaining. The latter might serve to increase motivation to use birth control prior to parenthood which could lead to more stable marriages or other cohabitating relationships.

Generalizability of the Study

The findings of this study based on the random sample can be generalized for women in Nigeria as a whole. This is because the respondents were randomly selected within two great cities, Ibadan and Lagos, which could be seen as the nuclei of the whole country.

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