

COUNSELLORS PERCEPTION ON THE CAUSES OF DIVORCE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE ADOLESCENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN AWKA EDUCATION ZONE

BY

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ABSTRACT

The study examined counsellors 'perception on the causes of divorce and its influence on adolescents ' Academic performances in Awka educational zone. The study adopted a survey research design and was anchored on Attribution theory. The study used a sample size of 31 counsellors from secondary schools in Awka educational zone, Anambra State. The whole population served as the sample. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers. The data was analysed using simple mean. The findings showed that sexual problem, psychological immaturity, lack of trust, marital infidelity, among others are major causes of marital divorce while prostitution, low self-esteem, low academic achievement, inability to apply acquired knowledge among others are major impacts of divorce on the academic performance of adolescents. Based on the findings, recommendations were made among which are; Awareness programme should be initiated using Counsellors and other Human Relation professionals stressing on the causes and negative influence of divorce on adolescents ' academic performance.

Background to the study

Marriage and divorce are both common experiences. Married couples expect a healthy life. Healthy marriage is good for couple's mental and physical health. It is also good for adolescents; adolescents grow up to be mentally, physically, educationally and socially balanced. However, divorce often shatters the peace and harmony in the family. Divorce is one of the many problems facing the family unit today. The term 'divorce' came from the latin word "Divortere" meaning to turn different ways or separate. This implies that Divorce is the final termination of marital union which cancels the legal duties and responsibilities of marriage and dissolve the bonds of matrimony between the parties. Kitson (2001), referred to divorce as a legal termination of valid marriage. Though it is not the answer to family instability, divorce is a social problem.

People have different views on the effect of divorce on adolescents and many analysts opine that when a couple opts for divorce, the resultant effects on them and their children are most times negative. Analyst like Owusu-Bempah (2007), asserted that divorce is a recurrent event in Nigeria which has impacted more than one-third negative effects on most adolescents. According to Modesty (2014), about 30 to 40 percent of married couples in Nigeria divorce. Divorce is typically a painful process for all concerned. It takes time for parties involved to regain psychological equilibrium. While the adults may regain, adolescents may continue to suffer one form of maladjustment or the other.

In Nigeria, divorce rate have been rising since the beginning of the 20th century, and parents in Awka educational zone are not left out and especially since 1980s. Some experts contend that the availability of divorce laws has helped weaken the strength of marriage making it difficult for couples to work out the inevitable difficulties that arise in marriage (Browne and Hamilton, 1998; Sheltezer 1994; Hetherington and Stanley-Hagan, 1997 Mezieobi and Okpara (2007), many factors are considered to be the causes of divorce in Nigeria among

which are negligence, sexual harassment, incompatibility, psychological problems, social problems, economic problems, health problems and many more.

The word adolescence is derived from a Latin verb 'adolescence' meaning 'to grow up'. As stated by WHO (2013), adolescence is defined as the period in human growth and development that occurs after childhood and before adulthood, from age 10 to 19. It is also referred to as the period of 'storm and stress'. Adolescence is described by Erikson in his theory as the period during which the individual must establish a sense of personal identity and avoid the dangers of role diffusion and identity confusion. The implication is that the adolescents must answer questions for themselves about where they came from, who they are, and what they will become. Thus, adolescent stage represents one of the critical transitions in the life span and is characterized by a tremendous pace in growth and change that is second only to that of infancy.

Prior studies indicate that education and income facilitate marital success. According to Voydan (2001), education promotes more effective communication between couples, thus helping them to resolve differences. On the other hand the stress generated by economic hardship increases disagreements over finances, makes spouses irritable, and decreases expressions of emotional support (Conger, Elder, Lorenz, Conger, Simons & Whitbeck, 2013). Nevertheless, well-educated individuals may hold especially high standards for marriage and expect a substantial level of emotional support, companionship, and personal fulfilment from their spouses. However, Kitson (2001) asserted that high- social economic status individuals, following divorce, were more likely to complain about lack of communication, changes in interests or values, incompatibility, and their ex-spouses' self-centredness.

In contrast, Levinger (2005), pointed out that low- social economic status divorced individuals complained about financial problems, physical abuse, and drinking, whereas high- social economic status\divorced individuals complained about lack of love and excessive demands from their spouses. These suggest that as social economic status increases, individuals are less likely to report instrumental reasons and more likely to report expressive and relationship- centred reasons. Hence, the education of an adolescent which is a process of facilitating learning, knowledge, skills, values and beliefs throughout the period of learning is being affected as both parents get divorced (Downey & John, 2013). Problems associated with divorce, such as lack of adequate parental care and concern for the adolescent is one of the great effect of divorce on an adolescent since the adolescent at his or her early age needs parental care to be able to adjust to his or her educational environment and to be able to cope with academic studies. In the absence of this care, the adolescent's education may be affected and he or she stands the chance of performing poorly in academics due to lack of parental care.

Statement of the Problem

Divorce is a common phenomenon which has attracted global attention. Government and nongovernmental organizations have played vital roles in the elimination of this menace; 'divorce', the World Health Organization (2013), emphasized the laying of conceptions among adults for the well being of adolescents. White (2006), pointed out the psychological and social problems which make the adolescents to exhibit strange and unguided behaviours.

Divorce is a problem which affects social, academic and behavioural state of an adolescent as it leads to adolescents feelings of anxiety, depression, decline in academic achievement, poor

school attendance, loss of confidence, and disorganization. According to Hargreaves (1991), adolescents may frequently exhibit anger, bitterness, apprehension, frustration, and even guilt on the advent of divorce of their parents. Adolescents may respond to these major changes by becoming moody or temperamental. Most adolescents, especially boys, whose parents are going through a divorce, experience academic and social problems (Pardeck, 1996). Hence, most adolescents exhibit short-term developmental disruptions, emotional distress, and behavioural problems. In the school setting, observations have shown that adolescents from such homes may react by becoming rebellious or by acting violently towards peers, siblings, or adults. Due to this backdrop, caused by parental divorce, this study therefore examined counsellors' perception on the causes of divorce and its impact on adolescents.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to find out the Counsellors' perception on the causes of divorce and its influence on the adolescents. Specifically, the study determined the;

1. Counsellors' perception on the causes of parental divorce.
2. The influence of parental divorce on academic performance of the adolescents.

Scope of the Study

The scope of study only focused on the causes of marital divorce and its influence on the academic performance of the adolescents as perceived by counsellors in Awka educational zone; adolescents in this work entails secondary school students.

Research Questions

1. What are the causes of marital divorce?
2. What is the influence of divorce on academic performance of the adolescents?

Method

Research Design

Survey research design was adopted for the study. This design was used because it affords the opportunity to measure the responses of study limits within moments of time, and enables the researcher to gather reliable responses from the respondents so as to arrive at a statistically reliable result.

Area of the Study

The study was conducted in Awka Educational Zone. Awka Educational zone is comprised of the following Local Government Areas: Awka North, Awka South, Anaocha, Dunukofia, and Njikoka.

Population of the Study

The population of this study consisted of 31 counsellors in Awka Educational Zone (Source: Anambra State Post Primary Education Board).

Sample and Sampling Technique

The total population of 31 counsellors was used as the sample size of the study. Ali, Eyo and Sowande (2000), recommended that if the population is small it should be studied entirely; therefore the researchers used the entire population, since the total population is small and can easily be studied entirely.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed by the researchers through review of related literature and in relation to the purpose and research questions guiding the study. The instrument consisted of item options organized in a way to sought respondent responses on the research questions posed.

Validation of the Instrument

To ascertain the validity of the instrument developed for the study, the purpose of the study, research questions and the items of the questionnaires were given to two experts both in the Department of Guidance and Counselling, and Department of Educational Foundations, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka. The experts examined the items in terms of content relevance, appropriateness of the items and made necessary corrections.

Method of Data Collection

To ensure high percentage return of the instrument and to create researcher-respondents friendly with better understanding of the questionnaire items by the respondents, one of the counsellors was briefed on what to do as research assistant and was engaged to help in administration of the instrument. A period of one week was used for the exercise to ensure a high response rate and high percentage return.

Method of Data Analysis

The Data collected was analysed using simple Arithmetic mean and simple percentage value as indicated by formulas shown below respectively. The mean of each item in the questionnaire was calculated in respect to the rating scale value of 4,3,2,1 for response categories as shown below. Any item with mean rating of 2.5 and above was accepted as perceived causes of divorce and the impact it has on adolescents while any mean rating less than 2.5 was viewed as not causes of divorce and have little or no impact on the adolescents.

Research Question 1: What are the causes of Marital Divorce?

Table 1 Mean scores of the respondents

S/N	OPTIONS	Mean(x)	Remark
1	Unstable employment	3.0	Accepted
2	psychological immaturity	3.0	Accepted
3	sexual problems	3.4	Accepted
4	personality clashes	3.5	Accepted
5	conflict in values	3.2	Accepted
6	Lack of trust	3.5	Accepted
7	Marital Infidelity	3.5	Accepted
8	Social exposure	2.5	Accepted
9	Educational qualification	3.0	Accepted
10	Family background	3.4	Accepted
11	Pressure from couples family	3.1	Accepted

In answer to question posed in research question one, result shown in table 1 indicates that sexual problem, unstable employment, psychological immaturity, personality clashes, conflict in values, Lack of trust, marital infidelity, educational qualification, family background, pressure from couples family, are major causes of marital divorce among couples. This means that when any of these items listed in table 1 persist in marriage there is the likelihood of marital divorce taking place. The mean ratings of these items except mean rating of social exposure is clear evidence that the respondents accepted that most of these items contribute to marital divorce.

Research Question 2: What Impact does marital divorce have on the academic performance of the adolescents?

Table 2 Mean scores of the respondents

S/N	OPTIONS	Mean()	Remark
1	Adolescent's academic performance in school is negatively affected	3.1	Accepted
2	Low academic achievement	3.2	Accepted
3	Adolescents exposed to divorce are twice as likely to repeat a grade(class)	3.0	Accepted
4	Most likely to be expelled or suspended due to deviant attitude	3.0	Accepted
5	Poor school attendance	3.1	Accepted
6	Anxiety and resultant decline in grades	3.2	Accepted
7	Aggressive tendencies	3.0	Accepted
9	Poor level of motivation	3.2	Accepted
10	Lack of concentration	3.0	Accepted

In response to the question posed in research question 2, result in table 2 depict that poor academic performance in school, poor school attendance and lack of concentration in class with other factors as listed in table 2 are the influences of parental divorce on academic performance of adolescents. The ratings of these items are clear evidence that these factors have substantial negative effect on the academic performance of the adolescents. Therefore, it means all the listed items are side effects of marital divorce on the adolescents.

Discussion of Findings

The study showed that sexual problem, unstable employment, psychological immaturity, personality clashes, conflict in values, lack of trust, marital infidelity, educational qualification, family background, pressure from couple's family are major causes of marital divorce among couples, while anxiety, aggressive behaviour, low self-esteem, among others are the impact divorce has on adolescents. This means that these factors have been the major causes of marital divorce in most homes. These findings agree to what kitson (2001), asserted that marital infidelity is one of the problems which lead to marital divorce. The findings also show that Substandard living, emotional distress, anxiety, girls opting into prostitution and the boys in the family taking to the streets as street or area boys as indicated in table 6 are the implication of parental divorce on adolescents. These findings agree to what Mezieobi and Okpara (2007), observed and noted in their study, that substandard living, emotional distress, anxiety, and depression are the implication of divorce on adolescents' behaviour.

The findings also indicate that poor academic performance in school, poor school attendance and lack of concentration in class with other factors as listed in table 2 are the effect of parental divorce on academic performance of adolescents. These observations and findings are in agreement with Dykeman (2003), assertion that poor academic performance and lack of concentration in class are possible impact of parental divorce on the adolescent's academic performance. It is also evident from the findings that parental divorce affects adolescents' educational values, norm and educational achievement.

Conclusion: From the study, it is evident that marital infidelities, sexual problems, lack of trust, among others are among the causes of divorce. It is also evident that marital divorce has substantial negative impact on social and academic performance of adolescents.

Recommendation

From the study it is clear that marital divorce has an effect on the academic performance of adolescents. Hence, the following are recommended.

Awareness programme should be initiated using counsellors and other human relation professionals stressing on the causes and negative impact of divorce on adolescents.

Approaches using role playing, modelling and other related techniques through the various forms of media could be initiated, portraying the causes of divorce and its impact on adolescents.

Through the welfare units of government ministries workshops, seminars should be organised for Parents, especially those who are considering divorce, emphasising the effect of divorce on their children's wellbeing.

Counsellors, Welfare officers, news print and media houses should be encouraged to imbibe the culture of printing fliers, pamphlets on causes of divorce and its impact on adolescents. Marriage counsellors have the obligation to inculcate on parents the culture that any factor that can lead to marital divorce should be well evaluated by parents in order to avoid possible consequences of divorce.

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