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'Ilemosu' social stigma and desire for remarriage among female divorcees in Akinyele Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Divorce is generally loathsome among the Yoruba people as it is morally reprehensible and socially stigmatized. Most women divorcees are derisively called '*dalemosu*', a term that represents failures in nuptial affairs and lack of capacity to manage marital crisis. To obliterate or counteract the social disapproval and stigmatization attached to divorce, many victims attempt to enter into another conjugal relationship, while others may never care about the disdain with the warped notion that marriage presents lots of injustices, especially for women. They instead prefer finding solace in single parenthood. Notions that "all men are the same" and "marriage is for the lucky ones" were identified as strong factors that made a number of divorcee participants to lose confidence in institution of marriage

institution. Leaning on the tripods of Socialist feminist, Psychoanalytic, and Social learning theories, this exploratory study inquired the shared understanding about the causes and social consequences of divorce on the female victims, the children, and the community. Qualitative data were gathered from women divorcees, community leaders, landlords, and landladies across Akinyele communities using referrals and snowballing techniques. Data collected were content-analyzed. Findings show that divorce is socially disapproved and highly discouraged among residents of the study area. Issues touching on finances, incompatibility, unfaithfulness, infertility, domestic violence, and lack of attention as common reasons for divorce. Thus, family members tend to treat female divorcees with contempt and, oftentimes, deprive them of certain social privileges. Having established that divorce produces damaging effects on society, the study recommends, among other things, the need for prospective spouses to seek the services of marriage counsellors. Mutual trust, tolerance, showing affection, as well as spending quality time with spouses in marriages, were also suggested as essential ingredients for matrimonial success.

Introduction

‘Ilemosu’ is a Yoruba concept coined to describe a woman’s return to reside in her biological lineage as a result of various situations after some years of marriage. Women found in this situation are labelled as ‘*dalemosu*’. In this circumstance, a woman may choose to abdicate her marital home for a variety of reasons. This is because marriages have their peculiar challenges, and to maintain a home requires that both the husband and the wife should work together with a common purpose. In an ideal marriage situation, there should be two people who are willing to care for the house regardless of any challenges that may emerge instead of the husband and wife deciding who will do it.

Among the Yoruba of Southwest Nigeria, marriage is not just about coming together of individual adult males and females, but the unity of two families that were never related by blood (Omeje, 2020). It is a social institution through which a man and a woman enter into some forms of contract for reciprocal obligations as husband and wife. Aroh (2021) noted that marriage has always been a partnership of survival with the preservation and improvement of the human species as its primary purpose. Obi (2016) posited that it is social contract ordained by nature for the continuation of human race. The essence of marriage according to Okoh (2014) is for procreation, care and education of the young members of society for the sake of continuity and survival of human race. It is important for marriage to be socially or legally recognized because it is through the arrangement that sexual and emotional relationships become legitimized in society. Njerem (2015) pointed out the significance of harmony, reciprocity, cohesion, fidelity, a high degree of stability, and unconditional love among couples. However, expectations in marriages are not always met as challenges arise from time to time. Hally and Hoffin (2015) identified conflict, violence, mistrust, constant bickering, neglect, and marital distress as symptoms of distressed marriage, which if not properly managed, lead to separation or divorce. Arowolo (2022) identified abuse, power tussle between couples, poor financial management, infidelity, infertility or

childlessness, hot temper, influence of mother in-law, influence of bad companies, influence of alcohol, improper use of language, impotence, poor communication between couples, early marriage, prolonged sickness, prolonged hardship, and maltreatment as other causes of divorce.

Hornby (2018) posited divorce as the ultimate end of toxic marriage. Mirror (2013) described divorce as the complete break up or dissolution of marriage through legal means, which according to Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend, 2004 and Norton and Glick, has been on the increase lately. Epstein (2012) despised divorce as he described it as a very special private hell, where financial capabilities are inconsequential. Just like what obtains among the Kanuris of northern Nigeria, failure in marriage attracts social stigma among Yoruba people. According to Cohen as cited by Omeje (2020), divorce is looked at as a moral failure. As Ifelunni and Asogwa (1995) earlier noted, divorcees among Igbos are not treated with respect in the public space as they are as well considered failures, which may, according to Holemsand and White (2015), lead to physical, social and mental illnesses. Other effects of divorce, according to Ezechi (2015) and Obi (2016) include low self-esteem, dissatisfaction with life, and financial insecurity.

In a study of selected communities on the causes of divorce in Rivers State, Nigeria, Asogwa (2003) noted that the most affected victims of divorce are children. The effects of divorce usually manifest on social and psychological well-being of the children as they grow up. He described the experiences of the children who were the victims of divorce as painful and bewildering. He argued that emotional pains and increase in mental disorder were attributed to high rate in divorce, especially when there was failure of the family to provide children with basic indispensable emotional satisfaction. Ikwuji (2002) in his study on 'the status of Information Service about Divorcees in Kogi State, Nigeria,' revealed that sexual excesses and other social misconducts by both parties were factors of divorce. He asserted further that frustrated divorced women often resorted to prostitution to make ends meet on one hand, and children raised out of wedlock, especially by divorcees, usually grow up to harass and molest the society on the other. Women who out of the need to honour womanhood, usually return to their family in order to forge a new life afresh, are not always given the emotional supports their situation demands. Among the Yoruba of southwest Nigeria, the practice in which divorced women return to their family house is labelled as '*ilemosu*,' while these women are often referred to as '*dalemosu*'. It is worthy of note that the social stigma attached to divorce and the changing face of family and matrimonial relations among the Yoruba extended usage of '*ilemosu*' as a post-nuptial concept beyond its original conceptualisation to cover the neo-nuptial concept of '*Iya'ndagbe*,' which describes a female divorcee who decided to live alone instead of returning to her parents' home.

With this age-long phenomenon and the branding of victims of divorce, adequate academic attention has not been focused on the factors leading to divorce and how the intricacies of marital dissolution can culminate into *Ilemosu*. Going by the painful experiences of female divorcee and the backlash of the phenomenon on the children, there is the need for academic interrogation of this phenomenon. This study, therefore, investigates the causes and consequences of divorce, which gave birth to the scathing concept of *dalemosu* among female divorcees in Akinyele Local Government area of Oyo State. While this study hopes to complement existing knowledge

on conjugal relations, it will as well serve as a guide and important avenue for narrating female victims' experiences of divorce. The study showcases a deeper and richer understanding of consequences of divorce, as well as the impacts of divorce on women, children, and the community. Specifically, the study seeks to provide answers to the following research questions: (i) What is the general knowledge of the causes of divorce which gave rise to the phenomenon of *dalemosu*? (ii) What factors influence desires for remarriage among female divorcees? (iii) What are the consequences of *Idalemosu* in the study area?

Brief review of literature

Marriage is a significant and natural human life process that has occurred in various formsthroughout all eras and cultures. It has made an effort to unite two people who have previously held disparate ideas and ideologies (Mutlu, 2018; Mohammadi, 2016). In addition, marriage is essential for human generational survival, child rearing, realizing the desire of parenthood, obtaining the highest level of friendship and closeness, labour division, cooperation, and helping one another in married life (Sadrolashrafi, 2011; Safiyari & Zare, 2015). Marriage should bring about happiness, but Jamshidi (2015) pointed out that the promises of marriage may be broken due to misunderstandings, poor partner choices, and changes in attitude. Keshavarz, Shariati, Ebadi, & Moghadam (2018) equally shared this sentiment.

Couples were not ready to get married, as seen by the rising divorce rate in the early years of marriage, especially among young people. Jebraeili, Zadeh & Heidari (2013) noted that in general, young people gave little or no consideration to issues of marital compatibility before rushing into matrimonial agreements. According to Saei, Ozgoli, Hejizadeh & Nasiri (2017), emotional demands, outside interference, cultural difficulties, and some internal psychological variables such as addiction, monetary woes, and betrayal all contributed to marital crises.

Concept of divorce

Divorce was defined as the judicial separation of the spouses as well as the total disruption and dissolution of marital relations by Gahler (2006) and Obiadi (2002). Divorce, in Hornby's opinion (2001), is the official dissolution of a marriage. Mirror (2003) describes it as the entire dissolution of a marriage via legal procedures. According to Mgbodile (2000), "broken home hangs a burden onto the children, while the breakers go about with a noose around their necks"; the children are the direct victims of divorce. He added that anyone considering divorce should be aware that they are holding the house and the children in their hands. Epstein (2002) stated that divorce is fraternity of those who have gone through emotionally ravaging phenomena that are equal to starvation.

According to Amadi, Unachukwu, and Igborgbo (2001), the hostile relationship between the wife and her husband's relatives, which made them oblivious to the early signs of divorce, including the husband's beating and mistreating the wife, his infidelity, the couple's lack of children, the preference for male children, the man's poverty and lack of emotional maturity, the difficulties associated with raising children and many other issues are the main causes of divorce.

When marriage is dissolved because of divorce, both parties shall be free from the obligations and bond of marriage. They could remarry elsewhere or live any type of life they may choose (Obiadi, 2000). Scholars like Ezechi (2005), Aroh (2001) and Ogbonnaya (2003), were of the opinion that divorce is the process of setting both parties free from the bond of marriage, which give them opportunity of new life. In addition, Omeje (2000) noted that divorce could conclusively be seen as a separation of the ties of marriage or a process of putting an end to the ties of marriage. Hornby (2001) defines divorce as the legal ending of marriage so that husband and wife are free to re-marry.

When a marriage is ended by divorce, both parties are freed from the ties that bind them. They had the freedom to remarry and live the kind of life they wanted (Obiadi, 2000). Academics like Ezechi (2005), Aroh (2001) and Ogbonnaya (2003) assert that divorce is the act of liberating both partners from the ties of the marriage, allowing them to begin again in a new partnership. According to Omeje (2000). Divorce can be clearly understood as a method of dissolving the bonds of marriage or a separation of them. Hornby (2001) defined divorce as the legal backup of a marriage that frees the husband and wife to get remarried. According to Anderson (2004), divorce is defined as one of the safety valves for inevitable tensions of marital life thereby ending the relationship or connection, which existed between two parties.

Divorce, causes and its effects

Okorie (2000), in his study of the Arochukwu and Umuahia people of southeastern Nigeria, discovered that childlessness is the worst fate an Igbo woman can have. Since many people who are childless or infertile are considered failed their only options are divorce or, at best, polygamy. Okorie's (2000) research confirms Norton and Glick's (1999) hypothesis that the recent decline in fertility rates may have contributed to the rise in divorce rates.

Divorce is a bad wind that blows nobody any good. In his study on 'the status of information service and divorce in Kogi State,' Ikwuji (2002) noticed that divorcees engaged in sexual excesses and other social vices, including prostitution, drinking, and gambling, to make ends meet due to frustration, neglect, and poverty. Divorce frequently results in the upbringing of children without recognizable father figures who later become troublemakers and a molestation of society. Divorce poses a hazard to people in stable marriages. For financial gain and company, exploited women seduce and seek out romantic relations with married men. Divorce thus creates enmity between individuals and groups and strains existing relationships. When children have been raised prior to divorce, they are destined to lack parental care. Divorce, therefore, results in unnecessary expenses on both sides, particularly when litigation and the payment of alimony are involved. Divorced couples also quickly lose their respect and recognition and become the subjects of rumour and jeers in the community.

The children are likely to develop into unpleasant members of society. They would lack the education, training, or other attributes that encourage peaceful coexistence; that is to say, divorce encourages indiscipline, hooliganism, and delinquent acts. Pope and Mueller (2002) found that

a broken family experiences financial hardship, at least while the child is living with a single parent. This indicates that the child will probably be obliged to forsake their schooling in favour of a career or marriage. In a study conducted on 'Sex role and psychological outcome for black and white women experiencing marital dissolution' in the London metropolitan city, which included 1000 divorcees, Brown (2000) found that the consequences of divorce could be either positive or negative. His findings of prevalence of physical and mental health problems among divorced population suggest an association between divorce and poor health including mental health. Thus, divorce becomes a turning point towards stress. On the positive side, he found that divorce could be a source of growth and wellbeing by providing a woman with an opportunity to realize her potentials for growth that might have been thwarted in the marriage, to expand her personal competence and esteem.

In a study on marital instability among the Kanuri of Northern Nigeria, Cohen (2000) found that divorce is looked at as a moral failure, and women divorcees are shown no regard by the society. In their study of demographic correlates of post-divorce adjustment among female divorcees, Ifeunni & Asogwa (1995) found that divorce is akin to moral failure, and divorced women were shown little or no respect. In another study conducted in four districts of New York, Bloom, Asher & White (1998) found that divorced individuals develop physical illnesses and have higher morbidity rate comparable to non-divorced married people. Epstein (2002) in his study on "Divorce: American Experience" found that the divorced and their children are a fraternity of the emotionally ravaged, and to go through a divorce is to go through 'a very special private hell' no matter how much money is available to cushion the fall.

Omeje (2000), in his study entitled 'Adjustment Strategies of Divorcees in some selected communities of Enugu State, found that adjustment problem itself is one of the difficulties or problems of divorce. In his study on 'Decreasing the Divorce Rate in Our Society,' conducted in Owerri, Imo State, Oko (2001) found that divorce weighs more on the affected children who lack complete parental care, and whose development are often affected psychologically. Mgbodile (2000), in a study of 'The Hangover of a broken home' found that 'as one cannot run away from his/her shadow, so one cannot avoid the hangover of a broken marriage.' 'Children, according to him, are the greatest victims of a battered marital relationship.' Weiss (1999), in his 'Emotional Impact of Marital separation,' found that effects of divorce include deviant behaviours such as juvenile delinquency, alcoholism, prostitution, and drug addiction. Other deviant acts attached include hooliganism, robbery, fighting, telling lies, stealing, dropping out of school, loose talk, and quick temper.

Kuppuswamy (2003), in a study of some selected communities in New Delhi, found that divorce, among other factors, is the cause of certain misbehaviours like chain-smoking, excessive alcoholic drinks, extreme wickedness, juvenile delinquency, prostitution, drug abuse, robbery, and loose life. Divorce causes timidity, emotional imbalance, telling lies, lack of parental care, constant fighting, suicide, waste of money if litigation is involved, and strain of relationship between in-laws. As found out by Asogwa (2003) in his study of the causes of high rate of divorce in some selected communities in Rivers State, a divorced home is a home characterized

by neglect, demoralization, and lack of parental care and such a home could be expected to breed delinquent and social misfits. The study also reaffirmed that those who suffer most during divorce are children for whom divorce could be a painful and bewildering emotional experience. Finally, the study shows that increase in mental disorder could be attributed to high rate of divorce where there is the failure of the family to provide individuals with basic indispensable emotional satisfaction.

Theoretical framework

The study is reinforced by the position of Socialist Feminist Theory, psychoanalytic theory, and social learning theory. The positions of the three theories were related to marriage, divorce, and the attendant effects of divorce in the society. The Socialist Feminists Theory (FMT) particularly identified capitalism as a main cause of exploitation in marriage. The proponents of the theory see women's unpaid job of housewives and mothers as means of exploitation of women. It is believed that the womenfolk are placed at economically disadvantaged positions that make them weak, docile, and vulnerable to the domination of men in marriage. The vantage economic positions that men occupy make them to dominate and dictate the tunes of marriage to the extent that the burden of divorce is less felt by men than women. In most cases, it is women that the society blame for divorce. Also, it is also easier for men to quickly enter into another marital union than women.

The Social Learning Theory (SLT), otherwise known as behavioural family therapy, was propounded by Albert Bandura. The theory assumes that when two individuals interact, they become part of each other's environment; and when marriages fail, the two individuals in interaction are liable to be blame since each can by his or her respective neglect of his or her roles contribute immensely to generating the emerging crisis. This implies that the traditional African practices as well as legal proceeding where a spouse is declared guilty and the other exonerated during disputes (or what Nwoye 1991 referred to as mono-causality) is not sustainable. The proponents of social learning theory agreed that most behaviors of a child represent carbon copies of the manifestations of what exists within society. The model which the child observes in his environment, plays important roles in social learning. The model's behavior may serve to elicit some responses in an observer that are already in his repertoire. This occurs when the behavior is socially prescribed or labelled as deviant behavior (Chauhan, 1990).

In Freud's psychoanalytical model, human psyche consists of three different elements: the id, the ego, and the superego. The id is the aspect of personality that is driven by internal and basic drives and needs, such as hunger, thirst, and the drive for sex, or libido. The id acts in accordance with the pleasure principle. Due to the instinctual quality of the id, it is impulsive and unaware of the implications of actions. The superego is driven by the morality principle. It enforces the morality of social thought and action on an intra-psychic level. It employs morality, judging wrong and right and using guilt to discourage socially unacceptable behaviour. The ego is driven by the reality principle. The ego seeks to balance the conflicting aims of the id and superego, by trying to satisfy the id's drives in ways that are compatible with reality. The ego describes how

we view ourselves: it is what we refer to as 'I' (Freud's word is the German *ich*, which simply means 'I'). Relating this to the issue of marriage and divorce, the Psychoanalytic theory explains the negative impacts of divorce which lead to the breeding of undisciplined children whose actions and behaviours affect the system of society and the community at large.

Methodology and data

This study adopted exploratory research method to investigate the general understanding of the causes of the marital concepts of *dalemosu* among female divorcees in Akinyele Local Government Area of Oyo State and the factors influencing their decisions to remarry after divorce as commonly practised by the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria. The adoption of exploratory method paves way for digging deeper into the subject matter and makes new discoveries possible. The population of this study consisted of divorced women; willing and unwilling to remarry, community leaders, and landlords/landladies in Akinyele Local Government Areas of Oyo State. Purposive sampling was adopted for the selection of Key Informants, while participants for the In-depth Interviews were identified through referrals. Twenty (20) In-depth interviews (IDIs) and ten (10) Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted to gather data from female divorcees, community leaders, and landlords/landladies in twenty conveniently selected communities located in the study area. Interviews were conducted using ten (10) to twelve (12) question items interview schedules. Each interview session lasted between twenty-five (25) and thirty (30) minutes, while data gathered were content analysed using thematic approach.

Data presentation

Reasons for divorce among spouses

Divorce, which has given birth to the concept of *ilemosu* among Yoruba, is sometimes inevitable for reasons of serious disagreements, which may be peaceful or violent, depending on the pressures they mount on human endurance. The realities of everyday marital experience have shaped participants' opinion on the reasons for divorce among spouses. Many of them, for instance, listed issues like impatience, low financial capacity, infidelity, deceit, unsatisfactory conducts, egoistic tendencies, breach of trust, maltreatment, lack of care, and domestic violence as part of the factors leading to divorce between couples. As narrated by one of the participants:

divorce is predicated on a number of factors. For some, it is due to impatience; some people are not satisfied with the marriage; there are issues of infidelity and mutual distrust; there are also allegations of maltreatment and lack of spousal care; issues of barrenness, male impotence and domestic violence also come to play alongside many other reasons. However, barrenness (a situation where the woman is unable to conceive) or impotence is very constant among the factors for divorce after few years of marriage (KII/Male/Landlord and Opinion Leader/Moniya, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

Underscoring the role of finances in marital relationship, another participant recalled:

I had to divorce my first husband due to financial problem. My then husband couldn't finance his home, and it is not every woman that can cope with such a man, especially when couples did not understand each other before going into relationship. I learnt from others who have also experienced divorce that domestic violence or abusive relationships is not strange to such toxic relationship, hence the breakdown of relationship (IDI/Female Divorcee/Ojoo Community, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

Another participant emphasised that:

money is very important in any relationship. Many married and those not yet married often complain of money. When couples cannot afford the basic things of life that would make the marriage flourish or even the basic necessities of life, this leads to regular quarrels, fighting, and unnecessary arguments. These issues specifically led to my divorce because I can't stand a man that is not capable of discharging his responsibilities (IDI/Female Divorcee/Moniya, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

In the opinion of another participant:

the reason why people divorce after marriage is due to financial problem because not every woman can stay where she is not being taken care of. I am a living witness of this scenario. It is a bitter experience and is not something that is good at all. My ex-husband started beating me barely less than one year into our marriage. Aside from this, he abused me in various modes, and I just have to leave because if I didn't, he might end my life one day, and I think it is better to divorce than to die prematurely in marriage (IDI/Female Divorcee/Akingbile-Oluana Community, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

Still emphasising the import of adequate finances in marriage, another participant notes that:

in most cases, money is a crucial issue in marriage; if there is no money, it becomes a problem. If one of the spouses has the money and the other does not, it is another type of problem. However, if the woman has the money and the husband does not, it is a serious problem. Another important aspect of money is how it is spent. If a couple cannot talk openly and honestly about money, it can lead to a lot of disaffection between them. It may even open the window for other issues to set in and lead to a separation or divorce (KII/Female landlady/Tose Community, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

In another dimension, a participant stressed that:

I will stick to lack of patience as cause of divorce. Each of the couples do not want to adapt to the other person's lifestyle. Unfortunately, that is what marriage is all about. One has to be able to adapt to the man's lifestyle or the woman's lifestyle because they both have different backgrounds. In addition, once one decides to come together, one should appreciate the backgrounds and tolerate him or her. Then, one must blend the two together to build a new foundation to live together (IDI/Female Divorcee/Idi-Ose, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

Another participant notes that:

abuse and violence lead to divorce. I will never advise a woman to stay in an abusive relationship because it can affect the person socially and psychologically. Several women in such situation have either suffered terminal illness and eventual death due to their failure to take appropriate steps. The failure is always a product of fear of what the community will say about the decision to run away. In my case, I don't care whether I'm labelled an 'ilemosu' or 'dalemosu'. What matters to me is my life and my happiness (IDI/Female Divorcee/Awumoro Community, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

Lending credence to the roles of abuse and domestic violence in marital disorganisation, another participant submitted that:

my former husband became toxic and abusive at a point, and this affected our relationship. It even degenerated to unnecessary arguments, and later to domestic violence. I later realised it is better to be alive than struggling to tolerate a man who was ready to kill if dared. I had to file for divorce. At the end, the court shared some of his property to me because I had three children for him, and I am happy with that because it is not easy to take care of children alone (IDI/Female Divorcee/Olorisaoko community, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

Another participant adds that:

sometimes, it is good to divorce than to stay because incompatible marriage will affect the children and their future, mostly their education and marriage life. I left my husband when I realised that our marriage was full of deceit. I did not know that he had two wives before. I thought that I was the only the person he married. Moreover, I came from a Christian home; it will be a slap on my family to remain in a deceitful marriage. I am happy I got to know this just six months of my marriage to him and I decided not to have children for him. This made divorce very easy for me (IDI/Female Divorcee/Alfonso area, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

Another participant reported a blend of unpreparedness, inexperience, and marital neglect as reasons for divorce. As she recounted:

my ex-husband courted me for just six months when he got me impregnated, we had two kids from the relationship. As time proceeded, he changed completely from whom he used to be at the period of dating. He started womanising and began sleeping with any woman he came across. He stopped catering for me and the children, in addition to his cheating exploits. He would not hesitate to beat a hell out of me if I reported him to my family. I later decided to depart along with my children when I couldn't bear the 'shit' anymore (IDI/Female Divorcee/Orogun, Akinyele LG/August 2022).

Regarding factors responsible for the phenomenon of dalemosu among female divorcees, findings of the study identified the practice as a response mechanism within the socio-cultural system of the Yoruba. It describes a situation where family bond and role system of the group dictate members' obligation and support in situations of marital crises that may be experienced

by any of them. One of the participants, in her description of the concepts of divorce and *dalemosu* opined that:

divorce signals an end to the existing conjugal union between a male and female. Thus, if a woman can stay alone and perhaps with her children after the dissolution of the union, she may not yet be said to have *dalemosu* until she opts to return to her parents (IDI/Female Divorcee/Alfonso area, Ojoo, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

One of the key informants also clarified that the concept 'dalemosu' is not applicable to all female divorcees. It only describes a situation in which a female finds it difficult to manage the crises of divorce alone, and as a result returned to her parents' house. Even though *ilemosu* is generally an unpleasant scenario in Yorubaland, it serves to provide emotional support for female victims of divorce against post-divorce trauma (KII/Male/Landlord and Opinion Leader/Ojoo, Akinyele LGA/August 2022). The foregoing emphasises the need to provide emotional support to female victims of divorcee as factors underlying the emergence of *dalemosu* in the study area.

Divorce and remarriage

Data supplied by the participants actually justifies the position of sociologists that man, being a social animal, cannot do without companionship or keeping company with one another, especially when it comes to persons of opposite sex. The necessity of such companionship manifested in the fact that man interacts and share thoughts together. Virtually all the participants affirmed the necessity of remarrying except one who differed in her opinion. One of the divorcees who subscribed to the idea of remarriage explained that:

I don't think there is any person in this world who doesn't want to be happy; I also deserve to be happy. I believe I can still find happiness if I marry again. Remarrying with caution and prayer, I think, is the way to go for me (IDI/Female Divorcee/Aroro-Makinde area, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

Another participant revealed that:

my work demands full concentration, so I am not thinking of remarrying for now. Moreover, my son supports me and Allah always opens the door of sustenance for me. Insha Allah I have never suffered financially. The ex-husband also still finances children's education (IDI/Female Divorcee/Ojoo community, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

Results also indicate that re-entry into another marital union may either produce different or similar outcomes depending on the socio-demographic context shaping the new arrangement. The intricacy stems from the ability and willingness of either party to cope with the of children involved from both sides as well as the roles of each individuals involved. As one of the participants in the KII explained:

it is important for a female divorcee to open herself for another relationship given the fact that divorce favours men more than women. The interests of men are always covered when it comes to marital relations. So, if a man is free to take another wife, what prevents a woman from choosing another husband? For me, I will always advise that women should enjoy their freedom under the law as men do (IDI/Female Divorcee/Ojoo, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

Another participant was of the view that:

except there is still room for reconciliation between a divorced wife and her erstwhile husband, women should remarry when faced with divorce. One important reason for me to share this opinion borders on the limited number of reproductive years available for women. Younger women who still desire reproduction should not waste their time waiting on nothing

A participant however warned that marriage to me is like a black or dark market; you enter into it without understanding the complexities and intrigues. What, then, tells us that the experience of the second marriage would be different from the first? This is why women who find themselves in this situation should tread carefully when making fresh choices. It requires prayers and some elements of luck. One should learn to expect everything, positive or negative (IDI/Female Divorcee/Orogun, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

This was corroborated by a Key Informant. In his opinion:

there is possibility of remarrying among women divorcee for social security. Remarriage is a good thing, for women divorcee so as to retain their dignity in society; otherwise, people will see them as prostitutes or an arrogant person who does not want to stay with a single man. A separated or divorced woman who could not settle rifts with her husband has no other option than to remarry; if not, she will definitely be branded as prostitute. Worse for her is to attempt returning to her parent because she will be tagged *dalemosu* (KII/Male/Community Leader/Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

Another participant was of the view that:

it is advisable for divorced women to remarry and not staying single. Single motherhood is not socially approved in this part of the world. Whosoever does that, especially those with children from that broken relationship, may find it extremely difficult to cope. The people of the community will not respect such woman and may see her as unserious person (IDI/Female Divorcee/Idi Ose area, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

Confirming the necessity of remarriage for divorcees' socio-psychological wellness, another participant opined that:

we are naturally born to interact with others in companionship. Since nobody falls from heaven and God Who created us knows our purpose on earth. However, we need friends, family, a lover and equally a spouse to relate with to improve our mental health (IDI/Female Divorcee/Orogun, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

Another participant affirmed the necessity of remarriage. According to her:

average divorcees will like to remarry because it is difficult to live alone without emotional supports. A woman needs to have someone to share problem with. Where the case can be overlooked is when the divorced woman has got more than two children. A divorced woman with only one or two children are thought of as operating below societal demographic expectation and, as a result, seen as unserious for refusing to take necessary risks of divorce and remarriage. This is because of the shared general belief in Africa's socio-demographic orientation that there is just a thin line between barren person and someone having only one child. Also, a divorcee who decided to remain single in her parent's home is thus labelled as *dalemosu* (IDI/Female Divorcee/Akingbile community, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

A participant slightly differs in opinion on the need for remarriage as a post-divorce step. As she submits:

women divorcee should stay alone and be independent so as to free them from male dominance and humiliation; they should engage in work to sustain their living rather than depending on others. Being alone doesn't mean being isolated and never seeing anyone. It just means being without husband. I personally noticed that it is always difficult for women to operate freely under husband; family disturbance is also part of the challenges of staying under a husband (IDI/Female Divorcee/Ojoo Barrack area, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

Implications of divorce on children

Family is the first institution to impact on various aspects of children's lives, enabling them to acquire the necessary behavioural skills in society. Divorce greatly influences the life and welfare of children and how they behave in the society; it sometimes affects them mentally, physically, socially, and emotionally. According to a participant:

the implications of divorce on children are poor academic performance, increase health problems, loss of interest in marriage, and it affect their emotional sensitivity. The summary of this is that I have unpalatable experience of divorce. It also affects my children; it gets them distracted, confused, and most of the time they lose concentration in class, this interrupts their daily focus and distracts their school work (IDI/Female Divorcee/Sawmill area, Moniya, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

Submissions from another participant show that:

the implications of divorce on children are not that palatable, especially when the divorced woman is dependent or not gainfully employed. The difficulties from divorce do not only affect the spouse alone but also include the children. It affects their academic performance and creates health challenges in them. Many times, children have lost interest in marriage as a result of their experience while growing up. The sad experiences have wreaked havoc on many children's emotional sensitivity (IDI/Female Divorcee/Asanmajana, Moniya, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

Further responses specifically underscore the negative implications of divorce on the children's educational performances and moral uprightness among other consequences. According to a participant:

poor academic performance and increased health problems are commonly experienced by the children whose parents have legally procured divorce. Of greater importance is the fatherly love that will be removed by the absence of the father from the union, especially where the mother has been allowed to take custody of the children (IDI/Female Divorcee/Arikewuyo, Moniya, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

Another participant was of the view that: "a husband provides his wife with a good family, a home without a father will therefore affect children's upbringing and the way they behave in the society" (IDI/Female Divorcee/Arulogun, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

Effects of divorce on divorcees and children

Divorce has traumatic effects on wives and children. Existing facts affirmed the negative effect of divorce especially on the women and children. It also affects them mentally and emotionally because there are lots of trauma attached to being physical and emotionally separated from one's spouse. While corroborating this, a participant submitted that, "there are several negative implications from divorce on the women involved." Participants described their life after divorce as traumatic. In the words of a thirty-six-year-old divorcee:

after my divorce, the environment in my mother's house was unexpected and unbelievable to me because I saw a change in my siblings' attitude towards me. They did not accuse me directly but their behaviour totally changed. Sometimes they made me to understand that I am a stranger in the house. So, I should not involve in family decisions and matters. Since my two children were very small and I had to stay only with my mother because my father was not alive (IDI/Female Divorcee/Onilu Community, Moniya, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

Directing attention to the socio-psychological consequences of divorce, another participant opined that:

resorting to divorced is not easy; living alone is equally not easy. Married or not married, being alone is emotionally straining and socially uncomfortable. The ability to relate with others and share your problems with them sometimes brings relief. One stands a lot to benefit from marriage as long as the challenges are not life-threatening (IDI/Female Divorcee/Shasha-Alfonso, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

Another participant expressed that:

my elder brother blamed me for seeking divorce, while my siblings refused to understand the psychological pressure I was passing through. However, I tolerated all is because of my children. Some of my relatives said that I was responsible for the dissolution of my marriage; they also blamed me for

my inability to endure the challenges of my marriage (IDI/Female Divorcee/Kajorepo Community, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

Post-divorce experience varies depending on reasons for divorce and the willingness of the family members to lend support. Narrating her own life experience, a participant notes that:

after my three or four months into my divorce, I began to notice some changes in their attitudes, especially from my elder brother and sister-in-law. They did not accuse me of anything directly but through non-verbal dispositions. Through body language, they showed me why I should have endured to sustain my marriage regardless of whatever challenges I faced. I found it difficult to adjust, and I was forced to isolate myself from them in every way possible to avoid further humiliations (IDI/Female Divorcee/Akinyele Community/August 2022).

In a different scenario, another participant narrated that:

my family members helped and supported me. They accepted me and made my life easier by not remind me of the divorce. However, I have been busy working in my shop to provide for my needs and improve my standard of living. The environment at place of work was not that much challenging for me. I have to keep my divorce status to myself by pretending to wear an engagement ring to hide my status (IDI/Female Divorcee /Ojoo, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

Another participant revealed thus:

I divorced without my parents' consent. They broke off all the relations with me. Therefore, I could not seek help from them and I got respites from my children's comforting words. Moreover, they tell me not worry and they are my backbone. I and my children are working hard to make life better, and we do not feel offended with what their father has done to us. Their kind words encouraged me and helped me to overcome the difficulties of the post-divorce life (IDI/Female Divorcee/Akinyele town, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

A participant equally noted that:

divorce come with many challenges, and to be frank, divorced women are not always happy with their status. Being alone equally affects them mentally and emotionally without having people to share problems with. However, there are things one can only share with one's husband but not possible with separation through divorce. Whenever I see women with their husbands, I feel jealous and envious of them; I don't feel happy about my status, I don't know about others (IDI/Female Divorcee/Oke Orogun, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

Insight into the effects of divorce was presented by another participant thus:

I can't say about others as for me, sometimes when I'm with people, I feel happy especially with my children but when I'm alone I feel sad because that time I need my husband. It is possible that some

women are happy because of the status of their former marriages and for staying alone but in my own case, I'm not happy at all (IDI/Female/Divorcee/Ajibde Community, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

Further, another participant in her submission revealed thus:

we are not happy being divorced because marriage is sweet if you are with the right person and can also impact children we have together. Again, if there is opportunity of getting married to a responsible person again, I will get married (IDI/Female/Divorcee/Kajorepo Community, Ojoo Express Road, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

In another development, a participant revealed that:

divorced women are not always happy with that status. In my own case, my unhappiness manifests when I feel lonely and need someone to interact with sexually. If not for that, I feel reasonably okay with a stable business and beautiful children God has blessed me with (IDI/Female/Divorcee/Aroro-Markinde, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

Some participants shared the opinion on the role of husband in the life of a woman. According to one of them, "a good husband is important to his wife. He is her help mate, a companion, her lover, her supporters, her friend, and more importantly, working together to build relationship and also produce offspring" (IDI/Female/Divorcee/Ijaye community, Akinyele LGA/August 2022). In addition, another participant opined that "it depends on the husband and the wife because each marriage is built by the couple. I do not need my husband for financial support, I need my husband because I love him and he loves me; other people might have different reasons" (IDI/Female/Divorcee/Iroko Community, Akinyele LGA/August 2022). Another participant was of the view that:

my husband is my companion who helped in paying expenses and also engaged in conversation, helped around the house with chores, and be an equal partner. However, my husband changed totally over time and the caring wasn't there anymore. I even felt unwanted by him because of the influence of friends. Cheating is something I hate, and he indulged in it, I had to leave that marriage, but it has not been easy because it affects me mentally and emotionally. Sometimes, I look at myself as a failure (IDI/divorce woman/Akinyele LG/August 2022).

Implications of divorce for the community

A general observation is that the divorcees live in communities, but female divorcees are not usually respected by Yoruba people. They are rather seen as failures and people who could not manage family challenges either as a result of greed or impatience; and, therefore, should not be tolerated in certain spheres of life. Narrating her own version of experience as a Community Leader, a participant revealed that "house owners or landlords are not willing to rent out their houses to female divorcees because many of them have different acquaintances who are suspected to be capable of implicating the landlord" (KII/Female/Community Leader/Ijaye Orile, Akinyele

LGA/August 2022). Another participant explained that “most landlords are unwilling to give divorced women houses for rent because of the difficulty in controlling them. If they instruct them to tidy up the house, women always found reasons to excuse themselves without complying with the directives” (KII/ Landlord/Community Leader/ IITA, Idi-Ose, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

In addition, another participant noted that “many divorcees are not always submissive; they can be promiscuous while some tend to live lavish lifestyle and entertain night visitors which sometimes bring harm to the residence” (KII/community landlord/Akinyele LG/August 2022). Another participant noted that:

It is mainly to avoid disputed and unnecessary argument and lack of endurance. People see them as persons who cannot endure and lack understanding, while at the same time used to extravagant lifestyle before marriage. A person that is used to all that will find it hard to respect their spouse if he cannot spend lavishly on her (KII/community landlord/Akinyele LG/August2022).

Still on reasons why divorcees usually have difficulty in securing apartment from the house owners, a participant noted that “they (Landlord) usually view the divorcees as irresponsible type that may not want to comply with regulations guiding the house. Aside from this, the practice of bringing different people to the house rented for her is dangerous for her and other occupants” (KII/Community Landlord/Aba Apata, Akinyele LGA/August 2022). Another participant revealed further that:

it is possible for Landlord to take sexual advantage of the divorcees if the woman is promiscuous. Some women are easily penetrated due to the harrowing experiences of divorce they are passing through. But where a woman is decent and responsible, it is always difficult for anyone to take advantage of her (KII/Community Leader/Sagbe Community, Akinyele LGA/August 2022).

Discussion of findings

Participants agreed that the causes of divorce vary based on the situation on the peculiarities of each marriage. As the study discovered, some divorcees were open to getting married again, but a significant portion of them could not. It also demonstrates that staying alone does not encourage emotional stability. This underscores the relevance of men's companionship and emotional support. However, while the participants all agreed that women could live alone, staying single was admitted to be very difficult and unadvisable for any divorcee's socio-psychological existence. Almost all the participants also agreed that children of divorced parents tend to perform worse academically; they suffer from series of health issues, lose interest in marriage, and lack emotional intelligence. As the study found, the children being victims of divorce may be frustrated to forsake their schooling in favour of a career or marriage. These findings corroborate Epstein's (2002) position that divorce weighs more on the children than their warring parents. Achebe (2000) points out that parents who raised a child have nothing to say to him/her about the constraints, roles and more expectations of the society in which he/she is to live. The Id, Ego, and Superego constitutes the three personality structures that make up an individual, while

a child passes through four unique stages of psychosexual development, including oral, anal, phallic, and genital. According to Freud, a person's experiences at each stage leave some distinctive impressions and imprints that affect what his or her attitude to marriage and divorce would be in the future. Apart from providing justifications for divorce, the study underscores the imperatives of giving sufficient considerations to the survival and socio-psychological well-being of the individuals engaged in marital relationships vis-à-vis the survival of the union itself. While the latter determines the health of human society in terms of its moral efficacy, the former determines the health of the actors in relationship. As the Socialist Feminist ideology suggests, due consideration should be given to factors necessitating marital dissolution as a worthwhile alternative rather than mounting a blanket moral condemnation against divorce.

The study findings established a connection between financial inadequacy and the incidences of divorce on the one hand, and the interaction between gender and access to accommodation on the other. This seems to be in tandem with the assumption of Socialist Feminists perspective, where females are presumed to occupy a disadvantaged position relative to males in terms of access to economic power and the propensity for being dominated, exploited, despised, or discriminated against. Divorce has also been discovered to have negative impacts on divorcees' social lives. This aligns with Asogwa's (2003) position that a divorced household is one that exhibits neglect, dejection, and a lack of potential attention. He believed that such a home would likely produce social misfits and criminals.

This study, in essence, shows that those who suffer the most in cases of divorce are the children, for whom it may be an emotionally traumatic and upsetting experience – a situation that may make the children vulnerable to antisocial behaviour. The rising prevalence of divorce, which occurs when families fail to give people the essential emotional fulfilment they need, may be implicated for the rise in mental disorders.

Divorce was noticed to have produced impacts on both partners in the study area, and as a result, produced noticeable impacts on community progress. In line with Ikwuji's (2002) observation, divorced women seek to entice guys who are happily and truly cohabitating. Divorce results in unnecessary costs for both parties, particularly when litigation and alimony payments are involved. Divorced spouses quickly lose their respect and recognition, and they become the subject of rumours and jeers in the neighbourhood. Divorce disrupts relationships where children have been raised in previous marriages and breeds animosity between individuals and social groups.

Conclusion

This study examined divorce in the context of *ilemosu* stigma with specific focus on its social consequences of divorce for the victims, and community as well as its imperative for remarriage. The outcome of this study validates the postulates of psychoanalytic theory. The causes and effects of divorce are many, as it includes domestic violence, infidelity, lack of adequate care, self-centredness, incompatibility, bad behaviour, infertility/impotence, and so on. *Ilemosu* was discovered to be the product of the Yoruba socio-cultural arrangement which arose in response to the emotional

needs of female divorcees. One of the effects of divorce is the emergence of the phenomenon of *ilemosu* which, though detested across the nooks and crannies of Yorubaland, still functions to provide emotional supports and succour to female divorcees. According to Achebe (2000):

the problem of inadequate superego formation presents a disastrous crisis in situation where the affected individual possesses a non-viable ego structure. This is also applicable where parental and home training is silent on matters of balance in social etiquette and moral values. It also applies to parental figures under whom the individual was reared had nothing to tell the child concerning the restraints, the disciplines, and the moral expectations of the society under which he is to live, work and have his being. It is therefore a fact that uncommitted and irresponsible man or woman cannot raise or maintain stable home without making recourse to divorce. Spouses must, therefore, be committed to loving each other and their children, helping and developing them in a right manner to become the best in society at large.

Recommendations

- Marriage counsellors should be encouraged to conduct further studies in this area in order to find a lasting solution to divorce, where zero tolerance would be developed against divorce.
- Couples should be admonished to solve marital challenges and refrain from seeing divorce as a solution. If all resolutions failed and dissolution becomes necessary, couples should jointly take responsibilities for their children's welfare.
- Counsellors should enlighten the public (students, parents, divorcees, and society) on their roles in family building and conjugal survival.
- Young people should be encouraged to attain higher education before entering into marriage. This can be done through counselling, workshops, seminars, print, electronic, and social media, etc.
- Counselling efforts should be focused on divorcees by addressing the issues leading to divorce and its socio-psychological and economic consequences.
- Finally, a synergy should be formed between counsellors, NGOs, and religious leaders to enable relevant nuptial education be appropriately disseminated to the grassroots.

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