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## THE EFFECTS OF PARENTAL DIVORCE ON SOCIALIZATION IN BENUE STATE

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**Abstract.** *The paper investigates the impact of parental divorce on socialization in Benue State using premarital birth and educational attainment as indices. Simple random probability sampling technique was used in the selection of 300 samples in the three zones of the state while percentages and chi-square was used in analysis of data as the study adopted Economic deprivation theory. There was a significant relationship between divorce and pre-marital birth as a significant relationship was found between divorce and educational attainment. It was concluded that divorce has a negative impact on socialization in the state. The study recommends for implementation of policies to improve access to education by children of divorced parents; need for couples to settle their difference peacefully; more efforts by social welfare authorities to manage marital problem; statutory provisions for parents to mutually assume responsibility of their children's education during divorce and advocacy on dangers associated with divorce.*

**Keywords:** Divorce, Socialization, Educational Attainment, Premarital Birth, Economic Deprivation.

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### INTRODUCTION

Divorce is a social fact that exists in all societies. In developing societies such as Nigeria, divorce is legally approved under certain conditions; however the cultural values of most ethnic groups frown at it. The behaviour entails that couples who hitherto live together as husband and wife become divorced either through dispute or mutual consent. The divorce leads to broken homes, a phenomenon which results to a single parent syndrome. Single parent syndrome is a manifestation of divorce or broken homes and in this condition, the responsibility of socialization of the child rest squarely with a single parent as the children are forced to live with one of the parents. These have far reaching implications on the social, psychological and economical well being of the child.

In divorce situation, both couples are greatly affected including the entire family members, but the child or children involved are the ones who suffer the most. In a legal divorce, the custody of the child is awarded in the best interest of the child. That is the court looks at the environment where the child would live in, the availability of basic amenities and the nature of work of the parties before the child is being handed over to one of the parties. In cases of non legal divorce, the child could live with the father,

mother, grandparents or family relatives. A child who is not well developed physically and emotionally may find it difficult adjusting to live with one of the parents or step parents if any of the partners remarries (Alubo, 2006). Getting a child socialized, attending to norms and values acceptable by the society is the responsibility of both parents. However, most parents do not aspire to fulfill this role when planning to pathways with each other. Most parents when filing for divorce neglect the issue of the child or children, as their welfare usually comes last as a result of their anger and emotional trauma. This neglect of the child's welfare has implications of the socialization of the child which is reflected in their life course behaviour.

The problem is to establish whether broken homes affect the socialization of the child in Benue. The questions that need to be answered here is whether divorce affects premarital births in Benue? Does divorce really affects educational attainment of the child? With these questions in mind, there is the need to carry out the study in order to determine the effects of broken home on socialization of the child in Benue which is yet to be proven.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objectives of this research are to examine the extent to which divorce impact on Childs socialization in Benue. The specific objectives are:

- (a) To investigate the relationship between divorce and pre-marital birth in Benue state.
- (b) To determine relationship between divorce and educational attainment of children in Benue.
- (c) To provide recommendations that would affects policy formulation and implementation on divorce.

### **Hypothesis of the Study**

- (a)  $H_0$ : There is no significant relationship between divorce and pre-marital birth  
 $H_1$ : There is a significant relationship between divorce and pre-marital birth
- (b)  $H_0$ : There is no significant relationship between divorce and educational attainment  
 $H_0$ : There is a significant relationship between divorce and educational attainment

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **The Concept of Divorce**

Many scholars have provided meaning to the subject of divorce in the society. Divorce can be defined as the dissolution of marriage which was legitimately or legally contracted,

which happens with the consent of both couples and their relatives or friends. According to Duncan (1957) divorce is the process by which a marriage recognized as valid can be revoked in the life time of the partners who then could revert to single status and are free to remarry. To Obiadi (1985) divorce means the breaking up of marriage or the dissolution or abrogation of marriage. He states that when a marriage is dissolved, both parties shall be free from the obligations and bound of marriage. Bahanna (1973) noted that divorce is a complex phenomenon in human relationships and that it takes place in six stages, these are emotional divorce stage, economic divorce stage, legal divorce stage, co-parental divorce stage, community and psycho divorce stage.

Wegh (2003), drawing his definition from a Tiv conception see divorce as literally meaning the dissecting of marriage, an expression which suggests the final process by which a marriage is brought to an end. Therefore when divorce happens, the woman who was once a wife to a man no longer retains that status and is not regarded as such by the man, woman's parents or other people. Shahram, Ali and Ghoobad (2012) noted that divorce should be seen as a situation where there is an end to marriage by a husband and wife. Ikyanyon (2013) on her part defined divorce as dissolution of marriage which was socially or legally contracted with the consent of both family members.

Divorce in this paper could be defined as a condition where marriage is cancelled by both wife and husband due to misunderstanding.

### **The Concept of Socialization**

Socialization is a concept that has been defined by plethora of social scientists. Parsons (1959), defining the concept from functional viewpoint, see socialization as vital to the process by which a value consensus is produced in society. Carlson (2005) conceptualize socialization as a term used by sociologists, social psychologists, political scientists and educationalists to refer to the life long process of inheriting and disseminating norms, customs and ideologies, providing an individual with the skills and habits necessary for participating within his or her own society. Socialization is thus the means by which social and cultural continuity is attained. Socialization describes a process which may lead to desirable or moral outcomes in the opinions of said society.

In the conception of Westen (2002), socialization is the process by which human infants begin to acquire the skills necessary to perform as a functioning member of their society and is the most influential learning process one can experience. This reflexive process of both learning and teaching is how cultural and social characteristics attain continuity. Socialization thus represents the whole process of learning throughout the life course and is a central influence on the behavior, beliefs and actions of adults as well as children. To Ridley (2003) socialization is simply the process by which a biological being becomes a social being. It encompasses all the processes by which people learn characteristics of their groups' norms, values, attitudes and behaviors. For Ikyanyon (2013), socialization is a process by which individuals become self aware and learn from the culture of their society.

For the purpose of the study, divorce could be defined as the process of creating individual's self consciousness through imparting societal values and norms to the individual so as to make the individual become a useful member of their society.

### **The Effects of Divorce on Socialization of the Child**

Divorce has been found to have negative consequences on the child when both parents abandon their role of socializing the child in a way that is most acceptable to the society he or she lives. Most parents take decisions about divorce neglecting the child or children involved and their well being. A researcher work by Kiernan (1997) has revealed that children between the ages of 3-6 years that are not well developed physical and emotionally are mostly affected by divorce. Separation of parents often makes raising and socializing a child more difficult because it becomes the responsibility of a single parent who may try to please the child in some ways especially in his or her demands so that he or she will not feel the absence of the other parent.

Amato (1996) argued that children from disrupted families are more at the risk of divorce because they have liberal attitudes towards divorce in their childhood or adolescence, these saw that divorce can be a solution for an unhappy marriage, and as such, their trust in the ability to make such long term commitment might be weaker compared to children of intact families. Gratton (1998) showed that, girls who experienced parental divorce were more likely to give birth before the age of twenty, irrespective of their situation. Walter (1988) was of the view that divorce not only affects the child socially, but even religiously, the child could be at a loss. This he said is so because a mother or father who broke up his or her marriage on grounds of adultery or infidelity, would have no moral right or the conscience to bring up his or her child in a Godly or religious way. Booth and Amato (1991) suggests that children from single parent households tends to hold less traditional attitudes, especially if the single parent households are mother headed. The effect of coming from a nontraditional family structure therefore may have an effect on children's gender role attitudes, but the effect is likely to be small and dependent on the gender of the custodial parent.

Hughes (2008) maintained that without socialization, society would not perpetuate itself beyond a single generation. Parental socialization is necessary in the life of a child, and in cases of divorce, socialization of the child is weakened in the life of a child especially when the single parent or the divorced parent has been remarried and he or she now have more responsibilities to take care of. In some cases, it could become worse when the child has half brothers or sisters. Individuals would lack those common understandings necessary to align their actions and to bind their separated lives into a larger whole. These rules and behaviors are both customary and acceptable to the society.

On educational level, divorce is found to have negative effects. A study by Steele *et al.*, (2009) shows that children of divorced couples are more likely to exhibit psychological, behavioral, social and school problems than children raised in continuity intact two parent

families. In the broken home situation, the child will find it difficult to fully concentrate even at school. Burgess (1996) research into the relationship between divorce and educational attainment and suggests that children in families where the parents' divorce start to do more poorly in education before the divorce takes place. Burgess argues that it is the quality of the family relationships which the divorce is only a part that are influential.

Kiernan (1997) sustained for instance that, children who grow up with both biological parents may end up better off both educationally and emotionally largely because they are advantaged to be with the both parents. As a result of divorce, the family where the child continues to live, often a female headed single parent family tends to be poorer and as such the child is not sent to school or to a substandard school where knowledge impartation is also poor.

Aasue *et al.*, (2007, 2009) on his part maintained that most of the educational effects of single parenthood are caused by the economic circumstances of the single parent. The effect of family disruption on children's educational and occupational attainment is due to father absence in most cases. McLanahan (1985) argue that economic deprivation plays an important role in the transmission of problems from single parent families to the next generation. Poorer families may have less money to spend on educational activities and less time available to help children with the school work. Economic conditions and educational outcomes are among the main determinant of the nest leaving process. Shorter educational paths and fewer resources from the family can accelerate the process of independent life and leaving home, in order to find better conditions outside the family. On the other hand, lower education and resources are also linked to the higher likelihood to be unemployed or to find less well paid and less stable work and can result in the lack of resources for economic dependence. Also in a situation where the parent is always busy and has little or no time to assess the child's academic performance when he returns from school, could lead to misbehavior by the child at school and this can affect his or her academic performance. Amato and Keith (1991) concord that children who experience a family disruption might have lower average educational attainment relative to children in stable, two-biological parent families, either because of deficits resulting from the absence of a parent in the same house hold or because of other deleterious changes that accompany the process of family disruption. Consequently, those who experience parental divorce may experience problems in school and be less likely to take further education for those who experience parental divorce at a younger age.

### **Economic Deprivation Theory**

The main assumption of the theory is that divorce leads to single parent's syndrome, and that single parents have less time and money for their children. According to the theory, in a situation of economic deprivation, the child might adopt adult roles earlier than usual to contribute time and money to the family household (McLanahan and Bumpass, 1988). When this happens, many children' socio-cultural and educational development is

distorted. Amato (1996) argues that single mothers often experience economic hardship because of the divorce, which translates into the inability to provide additional resources such as educational games, computers, books or private lessons to their children (Amato, 1996; see also Diekmann and Engelhard, 1995).

Thus; single parent's syndrome which may be precipitated by divorce leads to economic hardship and as a result a parent may not have resources and time to bring up a child in a way that is most acceptable to the society. In this situation a child is propelled to take up adult role such as premarital sex and may even drop out of school due to financial stress.

## METHOD AND MATERIALS

The research design adopted is quantitative design where the survey method is adopted. The sample size for the study was 300 selected using simple probability random sampling method. The sample ages ranged from 16-25. The sample of 100 each was drawn from the three zones in state: Zone A, Zone B and Zone C. The instruments used in the collection of data are the questionnaire. The questionnaires that were used in this research work were written in English, the questions were both structured and unstructured questions. The researcher personally administered the questionnaires and they were retrieved by the researcher. No questionnaire was sent or received by post. In analyzing the data collected, simple percentages and chi-square were used analysis of data through application of computer software known as SPSS. The responses gotten from the questionnaires were collated, analyzed and interpreted in order to arrive at a conclusion.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Results

**Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Demographics	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Age</b>		
16-20	196	65.3
21-25	104	34.7
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	178	59.3
Female	122	40.7
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	201	67
Married	87	29
Divorced	12	04
<b>Educational level</b>		
Primary	112	37.3
Secondary	169	53.3
Tertiary	19	06.3
<b>Occupation</b>		
Farming	109	36.3
Government worker	16	05.3
Business	22	07.3
Student	63	21
No work	90	30

**Source: Field Survey, 2013**

Table 1 above presents socio-demographic characteristics of respondents in relation to age, sex, marital status, educational level and occupation. The Table shows that majority of the respondents fall within the age range of 16-20 with 65.3 percent while those in the range of 21-25 were the least with 34.7 percent. With regards to sex distribution, male were the majority with 59.3 percent while females were minority with the percent of 40.7 percent. On marital status, respondents who were single constituted the bulk of the study with 67 percent, married respondents had 29 percent while divorced respondents were the fewest with 04 percent. With respect of educational level, respondents with secondary level had most percentage with 53.3 percent while those with tertiary education had the least with 06.3 percent. Further, respondents with primary education had 37.3. Lastly, in consideration of occupation, farming had most percentage with 36.3 percent while business or trading had least with 07.3 percent. Furthermore, government worker's had 05.3 percent, students had 21 percent and respondents without work had 30 percent.

**Table 2: Status of Respondents in Regards to Family Background**

<b>Divorced Family</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	69	22.7
No	241	77.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2013**

Table 2 above is meant to determine the status of respondents in respect of broken homes. The Table showed that majority (77.3 percent) of the respondents was from homes that are not broken while minority (22.7 percent) was products of divorced families.

**Table 3: Status of Respondents in Regards to Premarital Birth**

<b>Premarital Birth</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	75	25
No	225	75
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field survey, 2013**

Table 3 above is to know the status of the respondents in respect to premarital birth. The Table has indicated that 75 respondents representing 25 percent acknowledged their premarital birth status while 75 percent did not.

**Table 4: Chi-square Results of Relationship Between Divorce and Premarital Birth**

<b>Divorced</b>	<b>Premarital Birth</b>		<b>Total</b>
	<b>Premarital Birth</b>	<b>No. Premarital Birth</b>	
Divorced	46(17.2)	23(57.8)	69
Non Divorced	29 (57.8)	202(173.2)	231
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>300</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2013**

X<sup>2</sup> Calculated=82.973  
 X<sup>2</sup> Tabulated = 80.112  
 Degree of Freedom =1  
 Level of Confidence=0.05

In Table 3, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between divorce and premarital birth, has been rejected because the calculated chi-square value of 82.973 is greater than the tabulated value of 80.112 under 1 degree of freedom on 0.05 level of significance.

**Table 5: Chi-square Results of Relationship Between Divorce and Educational Level**

Educational Level	Divorce		Total
	Divorced	Non Divorced	
Primary	47 (25.8)	65(86.2)	112
Secondary	21 (38.9)	148 (130.1)	169
Tertiary	1 (4.4)	19 (14.4)	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>300</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2013**

X<sup>2</sup> Calculated = 36.789  
 X<sup>2</sup> Tabulated = 36.510  
 Degree of Freedom = 2  
 Level of Confidence = 0.05

In Table 3, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between divorce and educational level, has been rejected because the calculated chi-square value of 36.789 is greater than the tabulated value of 36.510 under 1 degree of freedom on 0.05 level of significance.

**DISCUSSION**

The results showed a significant relationship between divorce and premarital birth in Benue state (See Table 3). This means there is likelihood of children in divorced homes to indulge in premarital sex earlier than children from non-broken homes. Thus, divorce does not ensure that children are monitored or brought up according to the norms and values of the society. Moreover, there is tendency that a parent cannot socialize a child of opposite sex adequately in regards to sexual behaviour. As such premarital sex and subsequent premarital birth becomes eminent relative to children of non-divorced parents. This finding seems to confirm study by Martin, Mills and Le Bourdais (2005). In their study, they found a relationship between divorce and premarital birth as children from divorced parents tend to take up adult role earlier than those from non divorced homes and as such premarital sex and premarital birth becomes a common happening.

The result also shows a significant relationship between divorce and educational attainment of the Benue child (see Table 4). This entails that divorced parents are likely to



find it difficult to cater for the educational needs of their children because most of single parents tend to suffer economic hardship with limited time to monitor their children's academic progress. As result most of the children from divorced homes are most likely to dropout at either primary or secondary school level as compared to children from non divorced homes. This finding agrees with study conducted by Ikyanyon (2013) in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue state. She found that children from divorced homes were likely to suffer academically as most of the families do not monitor their children's education and that single families especially women tend to suffer economically, culminating in low educational attainment as compared to children with non-divorced parents. Amato (1993) also found that divorce has negative effects on children's educational attainment as single parents are more likely to be financially handicap therefore less likely to handle educational bills of their children as compared to non broken homes. Further, single parents are less likely to check their children's academic work as compared to non-divorced parents; therefore there is likelihood of the children to drop out of school.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings and discussion from the study, it can be concluded that divorce has negative effects on the socialization of the child in Benue state. This is because it precipitates premarital birth due to lack of socialization in cultural values and norms; and also affects children's educational attainment through lack of time and income necessary to cater for their educational needs. Thus, confirming the assumption of the economic deprivation theory which argues that divorced parents have less time and money to adequately train their children.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations have been made:

- (a) The government should initiate and implement policies that will help children who face economic hardship from broken homes to access to education.
- (b) Social welfare should work harder to ensure that cases of marital problems in their domain are settled amicable so that they do not result to divorce.
- (c) Statutory provisions should be made and enforced to ensure that parents who are divorced both assume full responsibility of their children's educational needs.
- (d) Non State Actors and government should carryout advocacy to educate masses on the dangers associated with divorce, especially on the children, so as to significantly reduce the rates of divorce in the state.
- (e) Couples should learn to tolerate each other and ensure that their misunderstanding do not end up in divorce so as to avoid repercussions that divorce have on the child and family.

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