

MAJOR CAUSES OF DIVORCE IN IJESALAND IN THE CONTEMPORARY DAYS

ADEKUNLE KEHINDE OLUFEMI Ph.D STUDENT

*Department of Religious Studies
Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo
adekunlekehinde5050@gmail.com
08035768486*

&

J.AFOLABI AMPITAN, Ph.D

*Dept of Religious Studies
Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo
afolabiampitan@yahoo.com
08075380238*

Abstract

Divorce has become a prevalent issue in contemporary society with an increasing number of marriages ending in separation due to various complex and multifaceted factors. This paper examines the major causes of divorce in modern times, emphasizing both individual and societal influences that contribute to marital instability. Key factors include communication breakdown, financial stress, infidelity, lack of emotional intimacy, and incompatibility, which weaken considerably the foundation of relationships. Economic pressures, work-related stress, and financial mismanagement often lead to conflicts that escalate into irreconcilable differences. The rise of individualism and shifting gender roles have also significantly impacted marital expectations, with partners prioritizing personal growth and fulfillment over traditional marital commitments. Additionally, domestic abuse, addiction, and mental health challenges create an unhealthy and unsustainable environment, pushing couples toward divorce. The role of technology and social media in modern relationships cannot be ignored. While these tools have facilitated communication, they have also contributed to marital dissatisfaction by fostering unrealistic expectations, emotional detachment, and increased opportunities for infidelity. The influence of digital interactions often lead to reduced face -to -face communication and emotional disconnection, further straining relationships. Societal changes, including the decline of stigma associated with divorce and the increasing acceptance of alternative relationship structures, have also made separation a more viable option for couples experiencing marital difficulties. This study aims to provide an in-depth analysis of these causes, shedding light on the key factors contributing to the rising divorce rates in Ijesaland.

Introduction

Marriage was actually instituted by God when he enthused that “it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make for him a helper fit for him” (Gen. 2:18). He thereafter created Eve to be his companion. The plan of God was probably for the union to last till eternity. However, the Jews, presumably inadvertently, introduced divorce – that is a man could put paid to the relationship between him and his wife (Dt 22:13 -19, 28 -29, 24: 1-4, Hosea 2:4). Essentially, the premise upon which divorce is based, according to Moses, is unchastity. The Jews were of the strong conviction that a lady should be a virgin upon marriage. The Jews also believe that wives should be chaste and should not be promiscuous. Sexual intercourse should be between husband and wife. Nevertheless, in a situation where this is not found, the man would like to call it quit. Jesus Christ did not subscribe to divorce, except on the ground of unchastity (Matt. 19:9). However, in the contemporary days, divorce is rife, not necessarily because of unchastity, but because of numerous factors, some of which will be discussed here-under.

Some factors that Engender Divorce in Ijesaland

It is pertinent to discuss in brevity what divorce is, before going to its major causes in Ijesaland, in the contemporary days. According to Emery, divorce is the legal end of a marriage. When couples marry, they promise to share love, relationships, money, children and often religion. They also take on certain legal rights and responsibilities. A divorce ends the legal obligations of marriage, but many experts say that spouses who separate must also get “divorced” in other ways. By this, they mean that the husband and wife need to separate emotionally, learn to deal with their friends and relatives on their own, and eventually make enough money to support themselves alone.¹ Shashi succinctly defines divorce as public or social recognition of the end of marriage.² Nock aligns himself with Shashi above as he pungently defines divorce as the legal ending of a marriage.³

Having given the brief examination of the etymological meaning of divorce, it is germane we move to the major causes of divorce in Ijesaland in the contemporary days. Financial straits which Nock refers to as *financial difficulties*⁴ is one of the major reasons for divorce. The basic challenge of lack of fund to run the home as expected, especially feeding and or payment of school fees had always been a serious challenge. Some women cannot fathom and or put up with a situation whereby there is no food on the table. The same thing goes with inability of the husband to pay the school fees of their wards. They (women) are always uncomfortable with the scenario. It is worse when the children are sent home because of non-payment of school fees. To some women, this act has demonstrated to their neighbours the magnitude of penury in which the family is found. The resultant effect of this is that some women would start to nag to the consternation of their husbands, who are of the strong conviction that they have

done the utmost in ensuring that the family is comfortable. Often, this led to imbroglio among the husbands and their wives. There could be altercation which may invariably lead to fisticuffs. When this type of situation persists, they get tired of each other and consequently end their relationship abruptly. In other words, the husband or the wife would seek for divorce. And since there is love – lost already, there is no alternative to that.

Besides, it has been established in some quarters that women generally are lovers of money. This is ostensibly because they cherish inordinately mundane things of life like clothes, chains, shoe, bags bangles, ornaments, etc, which are always quite expensive. To accomplish these, they probably need humongous sum of money to procure them. When there is the dearth of money to get these, they are always very uncomfortable. And they usually visit their displeasure on their husbands. Occasionally, this leads to cold-war in the home, as there is gradual but persistent love-lost, in other words, the hitherto existing love dwindles increasingly and makes the husband and wife to detest the disposition of one another, no matter how punctilious. The end of this development is usually divorce. According to Ampitan, more often than not, some wives would make life unbearable for their husbands when the latter are faced with financial straits. It is even usual for a woman to be unnecessarily restive when things are rough at home. It is as if heaven would fall. Usually, the husband is always at the receiving end.⁵

Furthermore, one of the fundamental reasons for divorce is unfaithfulness which is seriously frowned at globally. According to Emery, when one spouse may have fallen in love with someone else, the relationship becomes uninteresting.⁶ Rivalry, which the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* edited by Hornby defines as a state in which two people, companies etc are competing for the same thing⁷ is a serious challenge in marriage. When either of the two (i.e. husband and wife) is engaged in extra-marital affair which is known to the other partner, the atmospheric condition in the home is always frenzied. There is probably no one that wants a competitor. The Yoruba would say *awako meji ko le si ninu oko* (i.e. two drivers cannot be driving a vehicle) or *oba meji ko le wani afin lekan* (two kings cannot be in the palace simultaneously) are glaring submissions of what is obtainable in rivalry. There is neither any husband nor any wife that wants anybody to compete with him/her. Once marriage is consummated, the husband belongs to the wife, while the wife belongs to the husband. If and when any of the two (husband or wife) wants to look for concubine or what is today known as *side chick*, there will be catastrophe. And the end result of this, is usually divorce. This is because the home has been shattered irredeemably. Just recently, a lady in the Eastern part of Nigeria gave sniper to her two children and went ahead to commit suicide. This was ostensibly because she discovered that her husband was sleeping with their housemaid. In her case, she did not even wait for divorce, but

decidedly took her own life and that of her children. She did this because of the infidelity of her husband. This is to demonstrate that rivalry in marriage is seen as nothing but an anathema. Indeed, infidelity is considered as a gross abuse of ethical standard in marriage, and this is abhorred enormously. Chastity is what is ideal between husband and wife. Hardy pontificates that chastity is the preservation of life –virginity for the unmarried, continence for the widowed, loyalty to husband or wife for the married. Violation of chastity is fornication for the unmarried, adultery for the married (sometimes called double adultery if both parties are married). Perhaps in reaction against the laxity of the pagan world, the early Church tended to hold that sexual intercourse was permissible only with the positive intention of procreation.⁸

Again, technological advancement has contributed significantly to promiscuity. About seventy percent of what is found on *Face book* in the contemporary days are sexually related audio and or video. In the past, seeing sexual disposition was quite seldom. In fact, one could hardly see any, albeit, it could be heard, occasionally. Nevertheless, today such activity is quite rife in virtually everywhere in the villages, towns, schools, colleges, universities etc. This has somewhat prompted inordinate ambition to have sex, not only among youths but also among those who are married, even though such relationships are not with their spouses. And these have consequently resulted in divorce, if and when the bubble burst.

Differences between a man and his wife can lead inevitably to divorce, no matter how infinitesimal or negligible. According to Emery, people most commonly get divorced because they have serious differences they cannot resolve.⁹ For instance, a couple had disagreement over the usage to *Tooth paste*. While the husband said that you have to press the tube from the bottom, the wife said that, it should be pressed from the top so as to accelerate the discharge of the paste. They were on this seemingly trivial argument for a long time, until when it finally snowball in divorce. The position of the husband was that the wife was not submissive, otherwise, she should have obeyed his instruction. Ditto, a couple argued on the nylon of bread when they wanted to eat. While the husband submitted that you have to loose the nylon, the wife said that the nylon should be torn. Negligible or trivial as the issue was, it ended in divorce.

It should be noted without any spirit of immodesty that incompatibility is one of the causes of divorce. Some couples are simply not compatible. According to Ampitan, one of the probable reasons why there is divorce, is incompatibility. If anything, they should not have met at all apparently because of their divergence. However, they met. Nonetheless, during courtship, they strived to conceal what they are normally, such that they can both end up in marriage. This, of course, portends serious danger. And this danger comes to manifestation the moment the

couple comes together as what is supposedly *one*.¹⁰ Buttressing the above submission, Akande pontificates that sometimes, a man or woman may discover that both of them are opposite to each other in temperament, attitudes, character and thoughts. And often times, such incompatibility has been the cause of divorce and separation.¹¹ Doubtlessly, when there is incompatibility, there would be constant misunderstanding and or imbroglio, and the end result of this is divorce. Sexual incompatibility, for instance, can engender divorce. Some men are very strong when it comes to sexual intercourse. They are always having the urge for sex naturally and would, therefore, constantly perturb their wives. If and when the wives cannot cope with the sexual demands of their husbands, there would be problem. There are some men (albeit few) who can go for many rounds, otherwise known as *marathon* in a day; and that does not preclude them from requesting for sex within a reasonably short time probably few days thereafter. Regular demand for sex makes some women bicker, which often does not usually go down well with their husbands, who are of the conviction that their wives are of equal strength with them, when it comes to sexual intercourse.

Moreover, divorce also occurs because one spouse has a serious problem, such as alcoholism.¹² According to Mansky, alcoholism is a chronic illness of addiction to the sedative drug alcohol. Alcohol is one of the oldest and most widely used drugs, and many adults drink alcoholic beverages without becoming addicted. Addiction can be defined as compulsive use of substance, which the individual cannot control. Compulsive drinkers drink in spite of knowing that drinking is affecting their lives in a harmful way. Alcoholics sometimes stop drinking but unless treated, they almost always start drinking again.¹³ Without any prevarication whatsoever, drunkenness is somewhat a synonym of alcoholism. Shashi pontificates that:

Drunkenness in its common usage is a state of being intoxicated with alcohol (i.e ethanol) to a sufficient degree to impair mental and motor functioning. Alcohol is a potent drug and consequently it has a range of side effects, some pleasurable and some less so. The amount consumed and the circumstances under which the alcohol was taken can play a large part in determining the extent of drunkenness...After excessive drinking, unconsciousness can occur... Sometimes, people in such altered states can act irresponsibly because of reduced inhibitions. The term intoxication is typically used in legal proceedings when some crime has been committed during a state of intoxication. Although alcohol is commonly thought of purely as a depressant, at low concentrations, it can actually stimulate certain areas of the brain.¹⁴

The state in which one is under the influence of alcohol is close to that of insanity. There is the partial or absolute loss of the senses. The drunkard finds himself in

a state of rudderlessness. His misbehaviour is at its zenith, having lost his senses to the dictate of the magnitude of the alcohol that he has consumed. Wives of such drunkards are usually ashamed of the disposition or conduct of their husbands, as they find themselves in a state of melancholy and would, therefore, like to discontinue with the marriage, hence divorce.

Barrenness do engender divorce. The desire for children in African family is at par with, if not greater than the desire to acquire wealth.¹⁵ There are some men who cannot wait on the Lord when their wives are anticipating the fruit of the womb. They are always thinking that their wives should conceive and put to bed almost instantaneously. If and when this is not accomplished, they become despondent and look for another woman. This is because, according to Ola Akande, relatives of husbands whose wives are barren would urge the husbands to depersonalize their barren wives and take another woman.¹⁶ The family of the husband occasionally do exacerbate the scenario by giving the wives (barren women) diverse opprobrious names like *ako aja* (male dog), *ako ibepe*, (male pawpaw). It should be noted that *ako aja* does not procreate just as *ako ibepe* does not bear fruits. By giving these names, what they are invariably advocating is that the husband should look elsewhere in order to get children. Ostensibly because the barren wives cannot bear children, Ola Akande opines that, but men need not treat their wives who have no children as if they have no person-hood. The gift of a child to any woman is a prerogative that belongs to God. Some people in our African society believe that men only have the unquenchable blessing of making bearing of children possible, while the wives are usually the ones that may not have such a blessing.¹⁷

In the same vein, male children are highly enamoured among the Yoruba especially in Ijesaland. When wives give birth to female children, the husbands are somewhat uncomfortable. Again Ola Akande postulates that:

Any child, whether it is a male or a female, must be acceptable heartily, gladly and with thanksgiving to God by its parents. It is a sign of ingratitude to God for parents to reject any of their children because such children did not come as boys... It is a sign of ingratitude to God for a man to say to his wife who had just put to bed "You have given birth to a girl again in this house". And yet we know that women these days if given the opportunity as someone calls it *opporchancity* will hold their own very well with men. I am told that in a highly respected medical school in this country, all top award and honours in medicine go to the girls usually and not to the boys. There are fathers who will not provide their wives all that they need for the care of their baby girl, because the child is a girl. But what of the women who has all sons and yet

is in sorrow, crying at all times to God to give her at least one? I wonder what God would be thinking of such a woman.¹⁸

Mockery is often made to the discomfiture of some men whose wives gave birth to female children. Some of such are called *Daddy Abigirls*, that is, father of girls by their friends, associates and acquaintances. To a large extent, this somewhat infuriates those men inwardly. Boys are regarded as *heir apparent*. They would uphold or remain in their fathers' houses, just as girls go to their husbands' houses. Some fathers do not send girls to school. In other words, some girls were not trained because they would end up in the kitchen. Put succinctly, giving birth to girls can make a man divorce his wife. Some men have forgotten that girls invariably developed to successful ladies in the community. Some ladies are Commissioners at the State Level, while some are Ministers at the Federal Level. Even in the career Civil Service, Mrs Didi Esther Walson-Jack is the current Head of Service of the Federation (HOSF) and her predecessor is equally a woman, Mrs Folashade Yemi-Esan.

It is imperative to state quite unequivocally at this juncture that because some wives were giving birth to girls, their husbands have decidedly married other wives and surreptitiously asked them to be living in rented apartments, somewhere quite distinct from where they live with the first ones. In the alternative, some men married other wives and ask them to be resident clandestinely with their parents, under the guise of helping to do the house chores of their parents. The conviction of such men is that the new or second wives would give birth to *baby boys*. The implication of this is that the men have not outrightly divorced the first wives, however, they are, to a reasonable extent, *separated*. Nevertheless, there were situations where those new or second wives would be giving birth to girls equally. This is because, scientifically, it is the spermatozoa of men that serve as the determinant of sex of babies.

The attitudes of the husbands' parents to their daughter-in-laws is another major reason for divorce. Most parents, particularly mother-in-laws are often uncomfortable with the disposition of their daughter-in-laws, no matter how urbane. There is probably nothing that the daughter-in-laws would do that would be to the satisfaction of some mother-in-laws, no matter how punctilious. There are some mother-in-laws that would complain, very bitterly, about the unnecessary extravagance of their daughter-in-laws. Some mother-in-laws would bicker over the pieces of meat that the daughter-in-laws would serve. To some, that is, mother-in-laws, a piece of meat should be adequate for any meal. Wives, according to them, should learn how to economise and preserve money for the growth and development of the home. When wives economise, they would be able to save for the rainy day. Aside this, the family would have adequate money to put up a structure which they can call their own house within a short period of

time. Ditto, wives that love expensive dresses, bangles, chains, wrist-watches, may not procure these, ostensibly because of their mother-in-laws.

Besides, the involvement of African mysterious power can be responsible for divorce. The activities of witches, wizards and even sorcerers can engender divorce. Some of the afore-mentioned can engender disaffection between the husband and his wife. They can make husbands to dislike their wives, and vice versa, for no just cause. A couple that had been enjoying their co-habitation can suddenly detest the conduct of one another. At times, they do not even want to see each other, eye-balls to eye-balls. At times, when questions are asked as to what is responsible for their disagreement, none of them would be able to give a cogent or satisfactory explanation. Nevertheless, it is obvious that there is evidence of love-lost. And indeed, the end result of this is usually divorce, whereas perpetuity of the relationship of the husband and wife can neither be regarded as a religious dogma nor ecclesiastical imperialism.¹⁹ The relationship is supposed to be endless, until death invariably brings what can be regarded as “abrupt” end. Cohabitation of couple till eternity is not just necessary, but also mandatory, going by God’s injunction. It is, therefore, imperative to checkmate and or tame the hydra-headed monster called divorce.²⁰ This is because, according to Markman...divorce is in general, morally wrong.²¹ Some believe this, others don’t. Married people who believe in this are more likely to stay in their marriages.²² This is basically because God intends marriage to last for a life time (Mal. 2:14-16).²³ Evidently, the general teaching of Christ makes for the indissolubility of the marriage bond.²⁴

Conclusion

This study has succinctly examined the major causes of divorce in Ijesaland in the contemporary days. Divorce has become so prevalent and it is giving quite a good number of people much concern. The rate at which couples call it quit within a reasonably short period of time is becoming increasingly worrisome and alarming. It is as if they were forced on each other. It should be noted that the original intent of God was for the union to last for a life time. However, some factors which had been enumerated hitherto are constituting a clog in the wheel of continual togetherness of the husbands and their wives. Certain factors, trivial and or frivolous occasionally engender divorce which the couples probably did not bargain for when they decided to go into wedlock. Ola Akande pontificates that... In the original purpose of God, marriage was not to be broken up for any cause, whatsoever.²⁵ Nevertheless, the hitherto enumerated factors have succeeded in truncating the original beautiful plan of God for humankind.

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