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Effects of Broken Marriages of Children's Well-being: A Case Study in Nobewam Community – Kumasi, Ghana

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Abstract:

The effects of divorce on individuals and on society as a whole have been widely debated in public discussion of Ghanaian life. This study critically looks at the effects of broken marriages on children well-being. Specifically, study depicts the causes of broken marriages, the effects of broken marriage on children's well-being and the mechanisms to curb broken marriages. The purposive and snowballing techniques were used in the sampling of respondents. Questionnaires were used in collecting the data. The study found that children exposed to the unilateral divorce laws have poorer outcomes in young adulthood. Also the study found that children's development depends on the both parent and that the mental stability of separated parents also affects the well-being of the child. This paper contributes to the evaluation of how divorce affects the psychological and the emotional wellbeing of adults as well as the development of children. It was revealed that most marriages breakdown due to complex reasons and as such one cannot pin point the exact cause of divorce in marriages. It was realized that there are various contributing factors to divorce. Lastly, the study suggested ways to minimize and prevent divorce in Ghana. The suggested ways to curb broken marriages includes; counseling before and after marriages, understanding and effective communication of couples. It was concluded that understanding the wellbeing of marriage couples and their children can aid in providing ways of resolving any unrest problem.

Keywords: Marriages, community, broken marriages, children, well-being

1. Introduction

The institution of marriage is as old as the creation of man. According to Munrie (2003) marriage is viewed as a religious duty with its consequence been a moral safeguard as well as a social necessity. Broken marriage is a state at which two married persons go separate ways for a period of time. Divorce according to Haveman (1999) is a legal process through which a marriage is dissolved. Traditionally, divorce implies, one of the partners is guilty of some violation in the marriage and that one is at fault. Most countries do not support divorce whereas others support or are in full agreement when it comes to breaking up of marriage. The dramatic increase in divorce has affected a mass number of children. Every year, currently more than a million children in the United States come across divorce between their parents (U.S Bureau of the Census, 1989). An estimate of 38% of children born of white parents and 75% of those born of black married parents will experience divorce between their parents before the age of 16 (Bumpass, 1984). According to MacDonald (1978) divorce can be defined as the termination of a relationship, which is seen as marital relationship. It marks proceedings of a formal court and decisions made judicially. Children who experience broken homes are prone to mental trouble, poor accommodation, poor or no access to health care than those children who live with their parents. This clearly indicates that, two parents in bringing up healthy children are much better than single parents. Most children from broken homes are likely to become school dropouts than their peers who live with both married parents McLennand (1994) Children's from broken marriages are most likely to become addicts to hard drugs and deviant. Truthfully, children need the love and care of both parents. A family with love and support is the best environment for a growing child. In this environment is where children gain their identity, discipline and moral education which is very necessary for their social development and well-being. Studies also suggest that one of the single most important trends in the United States is the growing absence of fathers from children and this leads to truancy (Buchanan, 1996). Healy, Stewart and Copeland (1993), study reveal that school children especially those in primary six(6) after parental separation found that one third feel self-blame, develop a variety of child's problem and low self-competence.

Many divorce cases in Africa do not take place in courts but rather at homes which most often are in the returning of the bride price by the woman's family to the man's family (Douglas, 2005). However as a result of modernization in Africa, some marital divorces go through the legal process. That is; those marriages registered in court. For example in Benin 25.5% recorded unions ended in divorce within 20 years (Tetteh, 1967 cited in Frost and Dodoo, 2010). In Ghana, marriage is very important and considered as an institution. The effects of broken homes on children are traumatic. Broken homes can cause children to question their self-worth, to experience grief, or confusion, sense of insecurity, low self-esteem (Walker, 2007).

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Recent increase in divorce rates pose serious implications for and raise fundamental questions about marriage and the family. Divorce and its associated implications directly impact on separated couple, children, society and the nation at large. Impacts of divorce include emotional and psychological stress, reduction in the standard of living, child neglect, and breaking of family ties among others (Blankehon, 1995; Gleen, 1996 and Popenoe, 1996).

Lansford (2009) states that in the United States, between 43% and 50% of first marriages end in divorce. In Africa and for that matter Ghana most of divorces are not registered but in a report published by the Ghana Statistical Service (2008), nearly 600,000 marriages contracted in Ghana have collapsed. This figure essentially reduces the question of remaining together in marriage down to nothing. Naturally, the increased divorce rates have an effect on the children's wellbeing and the separated couple. "About 40% of all American children born to married, two biological parent families are likely to experience parental divorce or separation before they reach adulthood (Sun, 2009).

Researches on family processes and marriages such as Adegoke (2010) and Adedokun (1998) in Sub-Saharan Africa specifically West Africa have indicated that societies in this region had more stable marriages in the past due to the fact that many cultures did not allow marital dissolution. According to the Ghana Living Standards Survey Report (2008) of the Fifth Round, 30% of households are headed by single parents (Ghana Statistical Service, 2008). In addition, the 2000 Population and Housing Census (GSS, 2010) recorded 5.5% of male household heads who were divorced and 22.4% female household heads who were divorced preceding the survey indicating a relatively high rate among the females. This is an indicator of how more marriages are becoming unstable in this part of the world.

1.2. Objectives

The overall aim of the article was to investigate the effects of broken marriage on the separated couple and children's well-being. The study specifically aims at:

1. To examine the causes of broken marriages in Nobewan community.
2. To determine the effects of broken marriages on children's well-being and mental stability of the separated couple in Nobewan community.
3. To determine the mechanisms to curb broken marriages and the effects on the child's well-being in Nobewan community.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Causes of Broken Marriages

It has been established in literature that infidelities, lack of communication, mistrust, spousal violence, intellectual incompatibility, and early marriage are the causes of divorce. In the views Mohammed (2013), multiple and interlocking factors have contributed to the rapid rise of divorce in Ghana and other developing countries.

2.1.1. Infidelity

Unfaithfulness characterized as "a mystery sexual, sentimental or passionate association that abuses the dedication to a restrictive relationship (Glass, 2002). One may contend that treachery once in a while happens without individual/relationship attributes that may likewise add to separate. While 25% of divorced people report that a life partner's treachery was the essential driver of their separation (Kelly & Conley, 1987), people who isolated or separated after disloyalty tend to credit their breakups to various reasons beside betrayal. Reasons like savagery and family question (Buunk, 1987). Thus, it is particularly imperative to consider what unfaithfulness may imply to a couple and what meaning the accomplices join to it (Pesttrak, Martin, & Martin, 1985). The danger of separation is particularly high when both companions have occupied with betrayal and when disloyalty proceeds after a course of conjugal treatment (Glass, 2003).

2.1.2. Spousal Violence

Spousal abuse are mostly dominated in marriages and relationships. Emotional, physical verbal and sexual abuse is common in such relationship (Brown, 2000). Normally both genders are capable victims of spousal abuse. While the majority of men are not violent, some men learn express their anger or insecurity through violence this is done by beating their partner. With spousal abuse occurring in marriage, the victims are likely to get fed up and exit from the marriage thereby leading to divorce. Examples of physical abuse is beating, slapping, pushing, punching and biting makes it important to recognize that physical abuse or battering leads to divorce. Verbal abuse also includes yelling, nagging, insults, ridiculed, treated as a child makes it important to note that people in abusive will experience these behaviours from their partner which will lead them into separation (Brown, 2000).

2.1.3. Lack of Communication

Communication is seen by Hybels(2001) as any procedure in which individuals share data, thoughts and sentiments which include not just non-verbal communication, individual peculiarities and style. Communication is fundamental in all human life particularly the marriage relationship (Esere, Yusuf, & Omotosho, 2008). Absence of communication in relationship and marriage are viewed as a noteworthy explanation behind conjugal separation. Absence of communication assembles outrage, disappointment with no place for concession to any topic. Again with absence of communication couples don't share see on critical issues, where each couple wind up plainly quiet and hesitant to discuss the conjugal issues and family issues.

2.2. Effects of Broken Marriages on Children's Well-being

2.2.1. Poor Academic Performance

Children are mostly affected when parental separation occurs. There are certain factors that are attributed to these children when there happens to be a break up between parents. Such issues that cannot be adhered to are depression, acting out, and suffering problems academically. Children schooling and academic performance are mostly affected when there is a break up in marriages of the children's parents. Academics cannot be ignored when discussing about the crucial aspects of a student's life. Having achieved better grades, there is the likelihood for the students to further their education, being it colleges or universities. If there exist an unstable relationship filled with conflict between the parties, it can alter the student's academic performance. Amato (2014) found that children with divorced parents, compared with children with two continuously married parents, score lower (on average) on a variety of measures of achievement, adjustment, and well-being.

2.2.2. Physical Health

Parental separation influences children's physical wellbeing and life span. The individuals who encounter parental separation or detachment will probably have medical issues (regularly disregarding maternal remarriage, for example, a noteworthy in harm rate, an expansion danger of asthma, and expanded danger of asthma-related crises. Children whose parent separations are likewise more inclined to contract disease of the upper autodigestive tract, the throat, butt, pancreas, lungs, and cervix. (Hemminki & Chen, 2006)express that, "the outcomes demonstrate that posterity of separated parent have increment disease dangers at tobacco-related and sex-related locales. A Swedish study demonstrated that young fellows with separated guardians had a somewhat uplifted danger of hospitalization and altogether expanded danger of mortality.

2.2.3. Mental Health

Separate causes destruction on the mental soundness of numerous children. Upon the separation of their folks, children encounters an extensive variety of enthusiastic response, including pity, outrage, dejection, depression(which every now and again keeps going into later periods of life), uplifted uneasiness, stress, bring down life fulfilment, bring down self-regard and fearlessness, fear, longing, dismissal, clashing loyalties, and a feeling of blame for their folks' issues. An investigation by Popenoe (1996) of the national review of children found that separation was connected with higher frequency of a few emotional well-being issues in children; sorrow; withdrawal from loved ones; hostility, hasty, or hyperactive conduct; and either carrying on problematically or pull back from interest in the classroom.

2.2.4. Children's Development

According to Havrilesky (2006) who asserts that as soon as children start growing into adulthood, there are certain things which in one way or the other forms part of their lives, which can in the long run influence their advancement and practice. They assume an extensive part in the social and enthusiastic practices a child will have amid adolescence and sometime down the road too. The way a parent socializes may have a slight add up to do with their hereditary makeups, yet because of the child's cooperation's with and perceptions of, the guardians contribute more to the social and compassion related improvement than heredity does. Children frame exceptionally forceful passionate emotions about themselves and once they have decided, it is difficult to persuade them generally. In the event that guardians tell their children that they are imbecilic, that is what will accept in light of the fact that they don't have the confused idea about any better Havrilesky (2006). Without the act of conveying and connecting with their parent, children don't know how to be socially required with people around them. Guardians are the ones children look to as models for social practices, collaborations, and proper passionate reactions Havrilesky(2006).

2.3. Theoretical Perspective

The study made use of the functionalist perspective, conflict theory, and interactionist view.

In sociology, the Functionalism perspective states that, society is structured in a way that is to be able to maintain stability, that is to say its survival (Schaefer, 2008). The key ideas are balance, harmony and evolutionary, not evolutionary, change within the current scheme. Society's functioning now is the way it should be because everything serves its purpose. This perspective views society as a complicated system which promotes stability by guiding individuals with its social institutions that renders certain social function. Anything that causes disruption to the current structure or functions is seen as a dysfunction. The functionalism perspective perceives the society as a whole with all the institutions working together for society's development. Relating this to divorce and its effects on children's well- being, family and marriage works together as social institutions. Bothe children and parents have roles they perform in marriage. If one group fails to perform their role, there is dysfunction which can lead to a breakdown which mostly affects children.

Society sees family as the basic unit of every society. Though some societies frown on marriage breakdown, others do not. When there is divorce, there is some sort of disconnection between parents and children.

Another theory worth mentioning is the Conflict theory. Conflict Theory is a perspective that views society as groups that are struggling over power or resources (Schaefer, 2008). The key concepts are tension, inequality and struggle. Society is the way it is because of inequality and this in equal it should be actively opposed. This perspective views society as an arena of disparity that generates conflict and. Conflict theorists would describe the divorce as the competition for resources and power within the marriage where both parties cannot come to an agreement. The struggle over resources generates tension that results in a change in the marital status change. Relating this to divorce, misunderstanding or disagreement happens in marriage when one party displays some form of distrust in the other party. Families sometimes fight over certain things and certain behaviours like verbal assault, provocation also create conflicts which lead to family breakdown.

Interactionism perspective cannot be ignored when looking at the theories that can be used in explaining broken marriages The Interactionism perspective, also known as symbolic Interactionism, generalizes about individual social interactions as a way to see society as a whole (Schaefer, 2008). The key concepts are interactions, relations and symbolic meanings. This perspective views society as a product of everyday interactions. Humans are viewed as living in a world of meaningful objects with an emphasis on the importance of symbols. This perspective is closely related to social psychology. Social psychology explains human behaviour which results from the interactions of mental and immediate social situation. Interaction in marriage is a factor which holds the family together. When certain barriers affect communication and interaction, couples tend to hide certain important facts and issues which are supposed to be shared.

3. Research Methods

3.1. Research Design

A research design is an arrangement of condition for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance of the research purpose with economy in procedures (Setz, 1965) cited in (Kothan, 1990). The study employed quantitative research survey. The quantitative approach allowed determination of the distribution of incidents and inter-relation between independent and dependent variable (Kerlinger, 1986).

3.2. Sample Selection

Non Probability sampling was the sampling technique employed in this research. It allowed the researcher to select a sample from the population base on her own discretion.

With the non-probability sampling, the purposive and snowballing sampling technique was the appropriate technique adopted. The purposive sampling enabled the study to comprise of all respondents who have knowledge about divorce. Also the snowballing ensured that respondents referred the researcher to another victim of divorce.

Taking into consideration the time constraint, and what Giddens (2004) refers to as a representative sample, a sample of 121 respondents was selected from the entire population of people who are divorce at Nobewam community.

3.3. Data Collection

In collecting the data, the study adopted the questionnaire. Questionnaires are instrument containing a number of questions which a participant has to complete by herself or himself. The researcher administers the entire questionnaire in person that is moving from one home to the other, and the questionnaires are collected immediately after completion. The questionnaires were used because literacy rate amongst the respondents was relatively high.

3.4. Analyzing Data

At the data analysis stage, editing was needed to be done. Editing is the process whereby the data collected is examined for consistency of response. This is to check if all questions have been answered accordingly and if not, corrections are made. It involves reading through each questionnaire and the responses are carefully checked to determine its accuracy, consistency and reliability. The questionnaire was edited to suit the objectives and aims of the research. After the questionnaire had been thoroughly examined, they were serially numbered for easy coding.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Socio Demographic Characteristic of Respondents

With regards to the sex of respondents, findings indicated that out of the 121 respondents, as many as 45% were male while 55% were all females. This was a reflection of the finding of the 2010 national population and housing census. The current sex ratio is 95 male per 100 females is 12633,978 representing 51.2% while male accounts for 12024845, representing 48.8% of the entire population. The reason for female majority is that, the problem of divorce and its effects on their children is of importance and worrisome to them thereby participating as respondent.

Concerning the age group of respondents, the study revealed that (2.5%) of the respondents were between the ages of 17 to 25 years, (30%) of respondents having ages between 21 to 24 years, this was followed by (23%) of respondents having ages which fell between the ages of 25 to 28 years. However, (45%) of the respondents had their ages from 29 years and above. The sample revealed a majority of dissolution of marriage were between the age of 29 years and above. With regards to the educational level of respondents, out of the 121 respondents, 12.5% had no formal education, 15% respondent had primary education. However, junior high school

constituted 7.5% of the respondents, also senior high school comprised 22.5% of the populace, and tertiary education constituted 42.5% of the entire sample size. Thus, the majority of the respondents had tertiary education. We therefore concluded that about 87.5% of the respondents have some level of education.

4.2. Causes of Broken Marriages

The findings indicated that the main reason why people divorce their partner is due to infidelity, lack of communication, mistrust etc. From the study, it was revealed that 40% of the respondents were of the view that infidelity was the cause of their dissolution of marriage, the next reason from respondents was mistrust representing 27.5%, lack of communication constituting 17.5% and other reason like death, misbehavior, misunderstanding and more also representing 15%. With this findings, it was found that majority of the respondents argued that infidelity was the main cause for their divorce. This findings confirm with the study done by (Kelly & Conley, 1987) who asserts that 25 to 50% of divorce reported that, spouse's infidelity was the primary cause of their divorce. However, findings also indicated that marital abuse is among the reason why people divorce. From the study, it was found that 10% strongly disagreed to the facts that marital abuse is a cause to broken marriage, 15% disagreed, and 45% respondents from the total sample strongly agreed that marital abuse is a cause to divorce. However, 25% agreed that it was an account to their divorce, while 5% respondent also claimed that they uncertain that marital abuse caused their divorce. With reference to the literature review, spousal abuse occurs in marriage, that are not romantic in nature and when one partner seeks to dominate and exerts power over the other in doing so, the marriage often deteriorates and may become violent. Emotional, physical, verbal and sexual abuse are often common in such marriage (Brown, 2000). The results were summarized in terms of ranking based on the findings gathered from the field.

Causes	Averages	Ranking
Infidelity	4.23	1 st
Lack of communication	2.10	2 nd
Marital abuse	1.97	3 rd

Table 1: causes of broken marriages
Field data, 2017

4.3. Effects of Broken Marriages on Children Well-Being

Child development was seen as one of the effects of broken marriages on children. Findings indicated that 5% of the respondents disagreed that child development is regarded as an effect of broken marriages on children. 22.5% disagreed, while 2.5% were uncertain about child difficulty to develop as a result to divorce. However, 20% of the respondents strongly agreed and the majority of the respondents representing 50% agreed to the claim. With reference to the literature, it was been proven that children feel better about themselves when they know their parents are interested in their lives and what they do. In the same experiment, these researchers found that a family variable was associated with diagnoses of Major Depression, Conduct Disorder (Corliss & McLaughlin, 2002). The way a parent behaves around their children has a large part in how children's emotions will develop and how they will see themselves.

Also, children academic performance was been linked to broken marriages. From the study, 30% of the respondent was in disagreement with the statement that divorce has affected their children academic performance, they explained that because they know the importance of education, they were keen into their children's education. On the other hand, 52.5% agreed to the fact that because they are divorced, they hardly pay attention of their children education.

In line with the literature, when parents decide to divorce or separate, their actions can affect their children's education and schooling. Academics is one of the most important aspects of a student's life. With good grades, students are able to get into colleges and universities, and allow them to earn degrees in order to obtain jobs that they want. If the relationship between the student's parents is unstable and filled with conflict, this can alter the student's academic performance. The findings confirm with a study done by Amato (2014) who found that "children with divorced parents, compared with children with two continuously married parents, score lower (on average) on a variety of measures of achievement, adjustment, and well-being."

Also, child wellbeing is been affected as a result of broken marriages. The study found that 35% explained that it was difficult for one parent to provide their child's school needs, 30% claimed one parent cannot control the adolescent. Another 30% explained that adolescent spend time thinking about their parent, other effects of the child well-being was 5% of the respondent. It is evident that Swedish study demonstrated that young fellows with separated guardians had a somewhat uplifted danger of hospitalization and altogether expanded danger of mortality. Also, an investigation by Popenoe (1996) of the national review of children found that separation was connected with higher frequency of a few emotional well-being issues in children; sorrow; withdrawal from loved ones; hostility, hasty, or hyperactive conduct; and either carrying on problematically or pull back from interest in the classroom.

Effects	Averages	Ranking
Child well-being	4.84	1 st
Children development	3.39	2 nd
Academic performance	2.10	3 rd

Table 2: effects of broken marriages on children well-being
Field data, 2017

5. Recommendation

The following recommendation were been addressed.

1. Religious institutions and other marriage schools should frequently take spouses through counselling sessions before and even during the marriage.
2. Family counselor should organize workshops, seminars and conferences whereby couples would be sensitized on causes of marital disharmony and resolution strategies for resolving marital disharmony.
3. Understanding is extremely important when it comes to having a successful marriage. Couples need to understand each other's personality and accepts that there are flaws to every human. Humans are flawed and they make mistakes. The more the understanding, the more the patience, forgiveness, encouragement and love.
4. Communicating regularly and the use of love language do make marriages last longer. Couples need to communicate with each other about their needs and desires. To be able to enjoy marriage there is the need for couples to communicate regularly, share ideas, advice each other and make accurate decisions in the family which will make the marriage stable.

6. Conclusion

The following conclusions were drawn from the study. There was a high incidence of divorce or parental separation as far as the area of study is concerned. Thus most parents and children are victims of marriage break down in one form or another. The causes of divorce in Nobewam largely stem from the fact that there is infidelity a lack of communication among them married people. Most people end up in divorce because of the financial constraint to cater for themselves and their married partners.

Also, many of them are ignorant about sexual compatibility in marriage and how it helps sustain couples. There was also a high level of illiteracy which blinds them from the diverse effects of divorce on the separated parent's mental stability as well as the children's well-being. Divorce has effect on the academic performance of children, their physical health, social development and different aspects of their lives, but just to mention a few, while most parents get depressed and take to alcohol. All these are due to the absence of one parent in the up bring of the child. Considering the scholarly-sourced literature and the data collected from the field, it could be said with some degree or level of confidence that divorce has many effects on children's well-being and parental instability. These problems range from inadequate financial support, social development of children.

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