

## **Social Work Services and the Impact of Divorce on Family Wholeness in Nigeria**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The degree to which your family is connected, united, loving, and harmonious is the universal standard for "Family Wholeness". Every family faces challenges, but by learning and using useful skills, you can lessen the harm your family suffers and build it up to become healthier and more "whole". Working on your family ties requires conscious effort, but the rewards are numerous and the process is enjoyable. Family wholeness, which can be defined in a variety of ways, is a state of social functioning that is experienced when we feel connected in love and understanding with loved ones. The effects of divorce on family cohesion and wholeness were examined concerning the social well-being of either spouse and significant others (children) using secondary data. The findings demonstrate that the majority of clients experience feelings of hurt, fear, confusion, sadness, and overwhelm at some point and that divorce is unquestionably a devastating event for spouses and their children. The paper concluded that the traumatic psychological impact of divorce is a significant obstacle to family wholeness and unity; and recommends that it is important to address any issues in the marriage as they arise with sincerity and to make sure that any early warning signs of divorce are not ignored. Therefore, social work services for divorced people should not only be extended to children but should be primarily focused on divorced couples because they are equally or even more affected by divorce.

*Keywords:* divorce, ethical principle, family wholeness, social work service, spouse, separation

### **INTRODUCTION**

T A casual view of national and international newspapers, electronic, print and even social media reveals an alarming rate of divorce cases among couples globally. This is a fundamental challenge to the very foundation marriage is anchored upon; divorce, therefore, has become a stumbling block to family wholeness. The universal standard for "Family Wholeness" is that family is connected, united, loving, and harmonious. Family wholeness also includes the opportunity to demonstrate a standard of

living that promotes or optimizes all aspects of health and is free from any psychological disequilibrium. However, divorce hinders these characteristics of family wholeness, necessitating a clarion call on social work services—one of the first core values or ethical principles of social work practice—that focuses on assisting those in need and addressing their social issues, such as divorce-related issues.

Every family faces challenges; however, these challenges can be lessened and free from harm so that the family experiences can be strengthened to become healthier and more "whole" by learning useful skills and putting them into practice. It takes conscious effort to work on the family ties, but the benefits are enormous and the processes are enjoyable. Family wholeness, which vary in approaches, depicts a state of social functioning felt on those occasions when we feel connected, in adoration and comprehension, with loved ones and have a place to share happiness, togetherness and the opportunity to exhibit a standard of living that promotes or optimizes all aspects of health, free from any form of psychological disequilibrium. These are the characteristics of family wholeness. Divorce is, however, an impediment to these features of family wholeness, hence the need to activate the services of a social worker, which is the first core value or ethical principle of social work practice that is concerned with helping people in need and working to address their social problems, such as those thrown up by divorce (Nordesjo, et al., 2022; Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010).

Divorce, otherwise called disintegration of marriage, is a way toward ending marriage or conjugal association. It involves the dropping or dissolution of legitimate obligations and duties of marriage between adult male and female wedded under the standard of the law of the specific society, nation or state. Divorce laws shift significantly around the globe, yet in many nations, divorce requires the endorsement of a court or other expert in a legitimate procedure, which may include issues of dispersion of property, youngster authority, divorce settlement (spousal help), child visitation/access, parenting time, child support, and division of debt support, and division of obligation (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010).

Marriage, therefore, is an all-inclusive establishment that has existed since the biblical account of creation. The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18). The contractual marriage agreement usually implies that the couple has legal obligations to each other throughout their lives or until they divorce. A commonly accepted and encompassing definition of marriage is: Marriage is a social and legal contract between two individuals that unite their lives legally, economically, and emotionally. Marriage is defined

differently and by different entities, based on cultural, religious, and personal factors. Traditionally, marriage is often viewed as having a key role in the preservation of morals and civilization. Being married also gives legitimacy to sexual relations within the marriage Stritof (2018). In Nigeria, the sacredness of marriage is upheld across cultural and religious lines. The significant sorts of relational unions that existed in pre-colonial times were Social/Customary marriage and Islamic/Maliki marriage and recently Christian marriage (Laoye-Balogun, 2015).

Social services, sometimes known as welfare services or social work services, are any of a variety of government or privately provided services aimed at assisting underprivileged, troubled, or vulnerable individuals or communities. The phrase social service also refers to the profession that provides such services. In providing these services, social workers assist families in improving relationships and coping with unpleasant events such as divorce, sickness, or death. They assist families in the counselling process by assisting them in identifying difficulties, setting objectives, and finding solutions to their problems. They may also advocate legal action in a crisis scenario, such as neglect, substance misuse, or violence, like having children temporarily removed while the parents work through their troubles. Therefore, social work services comprise a wide range of interventions and support offered to individuals, families, groups, and communities by trained social workers. These programmes strive to improve people's lives by addressing social concerns, promoting social justice, and empowering individuals and communities to overcome obstacles (Pinker, 2023; Nordesjo, et al., 2022; Rembuluwani, & Heiletje, 2021; Oheme, 2018).

The concept of divorce entails a legal procedure used to dissolve a couple's matrimonial partnership. It can be referred to as dissolution of marriage and entails the cancelling or rearranging of the legal duties and responsibilities of marriage, thereby dissolving the bonds of matrimony between a married couple under the rule of law of the particular country or state before the death of either spouse (Britannica, 2020; Cathy, 2017). The law guiding divorce varies from country to country and some are based on their religious beliefs. However, in Nigeria the law is clear on the grounds for divorce, the first and most important thing is that the marriage must be at least 2 years old; if less than this, and there is still a need to get a divorce, the concerned individual will have to go through another route called "annulment". If it is over 2 years, then a divorce can be obtained. There is technically only one ground for a divorce in Nigeria: irretrievable breakdown of the marriage.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Rational choice theory (RCT) as a framework for analysing and interpreting social and economic behaviour was used in this study. Adam Smith, a philosopher, is credited with originating rational choice theory in 1776. However, in the 1950s and 1960s, sociologists George C. Homans, Peter Blau, and James Coleman championed rational choice theory in the context of social interaction. According to these social theorists, social behaviour is driven by a rational assessment of a cost-benefit exchange. It holds that people employ logical calculations to make actions that they feel will increase their utility or happiness. This idea has been used to explain many aspects of family behaviour, including the decision to divorce. According to RCT, divorce is a logical decision taken by individuals who feel that the advantages of dissolving their marriage exceed the drawbacks. These advantages might include enhanced enjoyment, freedom, and personal development. The drawbacks, on the other hand, might include financial losses, mental distress, and strained relationships with family and friends. RCT research has found a number of factors that impact divorce decisions. One of the most important variables is the occurrence of marital strife. When issues occur that cannot be resolved, couples may decide to divorce in order to stop their arguments and enhance their well-being. Furthermore, RCT reveals that individuals are more likely to divorce when they have access to alternative possibilities, such as education and work.

The methodology, which is mainly qualitative, adopted for this study included data collection from secondary sources like books, articles from libraries and online sources that help in the explanation of concepts such as family wholeness and social work services. These works were analysed to extract points made by different authors that argue for or against family wholeness and social work services. The use of secondary data in this research paper provides numerous benefits, including cost-effectiveness, time efficiency, access to large sample sizes, opportunities for longitudinal studies and comparative analysis, validation and replication of findings.

## **TYPES OF DIVORCE**

Divorce is not just a common affair, and the type of divorce a couple chooses to adapt, to a great extent, is determined by the peculiarities of their situations. There are several types of divorce; some are very different from the stereotypical contested type (Divorce Knowledge, 2014). The following are some of the different types of divorce:

**Fault and No-Fault Divorce:** A divorce based on "irreconcilable differences" or an "irretrievable breakdown of the marriage" is referred to

as a "no-fault" divorce. These are just fancy ways of saying that a couple can't get along and can't reconcile. When you file out your divorce petition (legal form-filling) in a no-fault case, you simply tell the court that you want a divorce based on irreconcilable differences; you are not needed to explain to the court what caused the divorce or show that it was your spouse's fault, because the court won't take either spouse's bad behavior into account. (Divorce Knowledge, 2014 Susler, & Johnstone, 1973).

**Emotional Divorce:** Unresolved, long-lasting arguments and disagreements accumulate over time and can amplify and poison the marriage, fueling a downward twist that can result in a divorce. If this takes place, respect, trust, and good communication may all be lost. The length of time a marriage might be in crisis of collapse is unpredictable, but many couples eventually reach a divergence in the road when they must decide whether to pursue resolution or disengagement. Essentially, emotional divorce is first experienced before a legal divorce because of the feelings of the couple, which is the need to withdraw and protect themselves from problems in the marriage. Either the male or female can emotionally divorce themselves from the marriage, but it is more common in female (O'Connell Corcoran, 1997; Meyer, 2018),

**Legal Divorce:** A court of law can formally and legally dissolve a marriage or other marital relationship. Divorce is another name for it. It is common knowledge that a marriage must be legally conducted and supported by a valid Marriage Certificate in order for divorce procedures to begin in court. Legal divorce specialized intermediation can be useful in resolving difficulties and in developing a co-parenting design when children are involved. Although they may have feelings of weakness, the attorney and the tribunal can help make a conclusion regarding each side of the divide; the attorney needs to be informed if there is need for more ascendancy over these decisions reached (ICFEG 2018; Scott, 2004).

**Uncontested Divorce:** Uncontested divorces are generally available to couples who have no remaining disagreements regarding the basic divorce issues: child-custody, child support, property division, and spousal support. Uncontested divorces usually have streamlined paperwork, in which property and child custody information is filed, along with a statement of the grounds for divorce. Once either spouse doesn't agree and makes the necessary court filings, an uncontested divorce cannot be granted. Like a contested divorce, it begins by one party to the divorce filing for divorce. An uncontested divorce relies on both partners working together to spell out the rules. Essentially, the routine involves both filing reprint paperwork with the law courtroom before going their separate ways peacefully (ICFEG 2018; McNamara, 2004).

**Collaborative Divorce:** A collaborative divorce is similar to abatement and intermediation, but instead of using a neutral third party to spur communication or make a sound judgment for the couple, it involves both couples retaining their own legal doctrine with a special direction on the collaborative natural law. Also known as collaborative legal philosophy or collaborative recitation, a collaborative divorce is another means of resolving contention between divorcing couples without deliberately punishing one another (McNamara, 2004). According to Adamopoulos (2011), the benefits of collaborative divorce is that it permits couples to avoid wasting the extra cost, time, loss of privacy and emotional distress related to adversarial divorce, promotes open communication, encourages respect and helps to guard future relationships. It focuses on problem-solving, issues of spouse and kids, and the resolution of problems are driven or controlled by perception of client's interests. Apart from saving money and time in collaborative divorce, Meyer (2018) stresses further that it enables clients to get through the divorce processes with their self-respect and moral standards intact, whether the collaborative approach was used from the beginning or not.

**Default Divorce:** A default divorce is granted "by default option selection" and without the need for the non-responsive spouse to appear before the tribunal at all (McNamara, 2004). A default divorce refers to a divorce that takes place when the party against whom the divorce suit is brought does not respond to the divorce papers served on them within the time limit set by law for such response. In some states, the parties can end their marriage by filing a default divorce, which is the easiest and inexpensive way to divorce. This is common when parties have discussed how they want to settle issues before the complaint is filed or when the defendant feels the complaint is reasonable. A default divorce may also occur when both parties agree on all issues. According to Chow (2012), default divorce may likely necessitate the petitioner to disclose her income and assets, and possibly try one final time to deliver these documents to the other party, even though the other party is not expected to reply to the documents. If the petitioner is seeking child custody, child or spousal support, or a division of marital property or debt, then she must also submit paperwork describing her wishes.

**Contested Divorce:** In this scenario, each spouse hires a different attorney and presents their respective arguments to the judge at the motor lodge. When both partners have a high net worth, significant assets and liabilities, and a lot riding on the proceedings, this type of divorce may be necessary (McNamara, 2004). Emphasizing contested divorce further, Trinder and Sefton (2018) opine that concessions are not achieved as a result of



persuading the court of the merits of their case or establishing the fact but rather as a result of what deals could be hammered out between the parties on the day of the court hearing, reflecting bargaining power and tenacity, rather than the veracity of any allegations.

### **GROUND FOR DIVORCE IN NIGERIA**

In Nigeria, divorce is based on the form of marriage. There are two main forms of marriage in Nigeria: statutory marriage and customary marriage. Statutory marriages are conducted under the Matrimonial Causes Act, and customary marriages are done in accordance with customs and traditions. A statutory marriage (sometimes known as a court marriage) is simply a marriage that takes place in a licensed register or location (church). Where the church that conducted the marriage is not one of those licensed under the Act, the marriage is considered traditional. Customary weddings are often done in a customary manner. Islamic marriage is likewise considered customary marriage, much as marriages done in unlicensed churches (Resolution Law Firm, 2020).

Due to the necessity to safeguard marriage-based children and family values, Nigerian law is particularly averse to divorce. The Matrimonial Causes Act (MCA) LFN 1990 and Matrimonial Causes Rules are the main statutes that govern the divorce procedure in Nigeria. Not just these laws affect divorce in Nigeria (Alloh, 2020). Several court rulings are essential to the overall legislation governing Nigeria's divorce procedure. Abandonment is a spouse's unilateral withdrawal from cohabitation without the consent of the other spouse, when there is no valid reason for desertion and the deserting spouse intends to end cohabitation permanently. The Matrimonial Causes Act 1 included abandonment as a ground for divorce and a fact that, if proven, will result in the courts concluding that the marriage has irreparably failed. As a result, the Matrimonial Causes Act's section 15(2) (d) states that "Respondent has deserted the petitioner for a continuous period of at least one year immediately preceding the presentation of the petition" constitutes an irretrievable breakdown of a marriage. If the respondent has deserted the petitioner for at least one year immediately before the presentation of a petition for the dissolution of a marriage celebrated between the petitioner and the respondent, the court will rule that the marriage has broken down irretrievably under the preceding section. One of the reasons a marriage can be said to have broken down irretrievably is desertion for at least a year immediately before the filing of a petition for the dissolution of the marriage (Alloh, 2020). A party attempting to dissolve a marriage is known as the Petitioner, while the other party being sued for divorce is known as the Respondent (Resolution Law Firm, 2020).

According to the MCA, only the irreparable breakdown of the marriage qualifies a court to dissolve a marriage. However, there are eight distinct types or classes of the breakdowns, subject to the Act's clause 15(2) (a) (h). The following is a new definition of the eight classes:

- a. that the respondent has intentionally and persistently refused to end the marriage;
- b. that the petitioner finds it intolerable to live with the respondent because of the respondent's adultery during the marriage;
- c. that the respondent has been acting in such a way since the marriage that the petitioner cannot reasonably expect to live with the respondent;
- d. that at least one year prior to the filing of the petition, the respondent had consistently abandoned the petitioner;
- e. that the parties to the marriage have been living apart for at least two years continuously immediately prior to the respondent's presentation, and that the petitioner does not object to a decree being granted;
- f. that the parties to the marriage have been living apart for at least three years continuously immediately prior to the filing of the petition;
- g. that the other party to the marriage has failed to comply with a decree or restitution of conjugal rights made under that Act for at least one year;
- h. that the other party to the marriage has been absent from the petitioner for such a period of time and in such a way that gives good reason to believe that they are dead.

The emphasis on different forms of marriage is significant because it determines whether courts have jurisdiction or authority to hear the divorce case. Where a marriage is classified as Statutory Marriage, the State High Courts and the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory have the authority to hear the case and dissolve the marriage. Where a marriage is deemed Customary Marriage, the Customary Court in each local government has the authority to rule on it.

The practice of bringing the families of both spouse together to agree, bring and accept a return of the bride price, constituting completion of divorce process, without the rigor of litigation process, is a common



practice in Nigeria. Although not often or seldom documented, this practice has incrementally continued to gain momentum as well as legal support. According to Alieke (2023), the statute also recognises customary divorce, and the sole recognised manner of terminating a marriage is to refund the bride price paid back to the groom. On several occasions, the court has maintained the tradition of repaying the bride's price to confirm a conventional divorce. In the case of *Eze v. Omeke* (1977) 1 ANSLR 136, the Court held that any order dissolving a customary law marriage without a subsequent order for the return or acceptance of the bride-price or dowry is meaningless. In fact, in the case of *Tabitha Bawa v. Bawa Waziri* CCKJ/CV/14/2011, the court not only ordered the recovery of the bride price, but also ordered the lady to pay all incidental pre-marital expenses to the man. As a result of the implication of court rulings, statutory provisions, and acknowledged customary practices that have been judicially recognised, the returning of the bride price is what invalidates a customary marriage; thus, when the bride price has yet to be returned, the marriage is deemed to be valid and existing, and any of the parties who enters into another marriage may be held liable for bigamy.

## **CAUSES OF DIVORCE**

Neglecting issues in a relationship is not in the interest of such a relationship, as the neglected issues can snowball into divorce. Different factors are responsible for divorce; it varies from individual to individual, so what could be responsible for the divorce of marriage between A and B could be what is binding the marriage between C and D. However, the following are common causes of divorce:

**Lack of Communication:** Lack of communication in marriage is a major causative factor in divorce as it tends to lead to every other reason or cause of divorce. Marriage consists of two people who come from different backgrounds and have different methods of communication, so they need to communicate in the language both of them can understand, especially in the area of wants and needs as they are now one. Absence of communication means your work, home, and sex life will suffer when you do not share your thoughts and feelings with your partner. Your relationship needs a strong emotional and physical bond to succeed, and communicate with your spouse, even when the subject matter is awkward or uncomfortable, is essential. So it is understandable how these varying factors can make it difficult for couples to talk. In his opinion, Warren (2018) insists communication is crucial in marriage and not being able to communicate effectively quickly leads to resentment and frustration for both, impacting all aspects of a marriage. Shouting at your spouse, not talking enough throughout the day, and making nasty comments to express

yourself are all unhealthy methods of communication that need to be ditched from marriage (Rubab, & Alam, 2022; Paulinus, 2022; ICFEG 2018).

**Unrealistic Expectations:** Unrealistic expectations are products of lofty heights set before marriage that the focus was not on personality but on materialism. Tartakovsky (2018) asserts that when you expect that your relationship is meant to be a certain way, and that expectation doesn't happen, this can create feelings of anxiety, sadness, and despair; it can equally spark resentment, which can ruin relationships. Unrealistic expectations “set up couples to fail” (Tartakovsky, 2018, quoting Clinton Power, a clinical relationship counselor). It is easy to go into marriage with lofty expectations—expecting your spouse and the marriage to live up to your image of what they should be. These expectations put a lot of strain on the other person, leaving you feeling let down and setting your spouse up for failure (Wynstra, 2023; Warren, 2018).

**Lack of Intimacy:** Lack of connection can swiftly lead to the breakdown of a marriage since it makes partners feel more like roommates than spouses or as though they are cohabiting with a stranger. This isn't necessarily about having sex and can result from a lack of emotional or physical intimacy. Know that over time, if you consistently give your spouse the cold shoulder, it may create a basis for divorce. Both partners are accountable for fostering intimacy and specialness in your relationship. To improve your relationship, try to do small acts of kindness and appreciation for each other as well as enjoy physical intimacy as much as you can (Warren, 2018).

**Abuse:** Abuse in marriage is a red flag in that relationship; many people said their marriage would end if their partner hit them or sexually or physically mistreated their kids. Many individuals would not allow themselves or their children to be mistreated in that way, especially by someone who promised to love them. However, many people choose to stay in physically abusive relationships, and some spouses choose to look the other way if their spouse abuses their children; this comes down to a trust issue (Wynstra, 2023; Oliver, 2013).

**Sex and Money Issues:** Sexual incompatibility is one of the major cases of divorce. Melone (2016), quoting Jessica O'Reilly, author of *The New Sex Bible*, says “Hormonal changes that arise with age can cause significant shifts in sex drive. And though every couple of every age experiences differentials in desire, these can become more pronounced with age.” Sexless marriage is a silent marriage killer; it starts as a slow injury, and then explodes at the end of a marriage. This issue, which is

more common than imagined, has been responsible for many divorce cases. Leamon (2017) emphasized three reasons that could be responsible for this silent marriage killer. Making excuses is the first reason: some spouses who, for one reason or another, may want to avoid sex hide under different excuses to deny their partners, probably because their libidos are affected by hormones and exhaustion. This may be perfectly normal, especially after their children are born. However, when the kids get older and the couple has more time, the blame switches to something else, such as demands at work; it goes on and eventually ends in divorce. The second reason is not making an effort: this refers to a spouse refusing to put forth any effort, like letting the other know how unhappy he or she is. If the spouse who is avoiding intimacy refuses to work on the problem through counselling or medical checkups, this problem can become worse. Sexual problems are nothing to be ashamed of; it is ignoring the unhappiness of the other partner that is detrimental to a marriage. To be defensive and refusing to listen to one another in trying to talk about your sexless marriage is disrespectful; every marriage requires compromise. Agreeing to go to a sex therapist or the couple's counsellor is enough to show that they both respect the marriage and will try to work on the problem; doing otherwise may make divorce inevitable.

Money issues such as spending habits and financial difficulties may finally come to a head and cause a break-up. A spouse may be a big spender while the other likes to save; Melone (2016) says, "The kids' activities, expenses and college funds eat the family's discretionary cash and you are deep in debt." If you tend to be a little reckless with money or a negligent financial planner, it is going to negatively affect your partner and the overall longevity of your relationship.

Without a doubt, understanding differences in money management styles and sex life between couples is very important to either encourage divorce or prevent it. Many people in happy relationships said if their spouse lied to them, they may not be able to continue the relationship. For many, the marriage should be built on absolute trust. When that trust is abused or broken, some cannot maintain that relationship (Oliver, 2013; Wynstra, 2023).

## **DIVORCE AND FAMILY WHOLENESS**

Wholeness in a family implies a unified and strong band that is capable of withstanding adversities, investing in meaningful relationship activities, and creating value together (CFED, 2018). At this stage of togetherness, one can begin to talk about "family wholeness" or "solidarity in a family". There is a wide range of approaches to portray or consider; however,

presumably most essential, we can feel it in those occasions when we feel associated in admiration and comprehension and having a place to showcase the beauty and joy of achieving the complete state of physical, mental and social well-being. Typically, we don't talk about this feeling of family harmony. Whether or not we can feel it, it is true to some extent that, given the state of the world today and the pressures on families, we may not feel this harmony in any particular way. Regardless of whether we are able to express family wholeness in language or actions, divorce is typically a hindrance to this harmony for children and parents, and has general consequences (McNamara, 2004).

Divorce can have a significant impact on family unity, according to social workers. Divorce is a complicated process that affects not only the couple involved but also their children and the dynamics of the family as a whole. Consequently, this article, which relies on secondary data, aims to investigate divorce to ascertain its impacts on family wholeness and the role of the social worker in helping to ameliorate these impacts for the social functioning of the individual. Divorce affects many marriages, and several of the affected couples have children. Social workers may assist parents in healing after divorce, developing new coping skills, and focusing on keeping their children out of post-divorce turmoil (Damota, 2019).

### **Divorce Impact on Family Wholeness and the Role of a Social Worker**

Divorce has a great deal of impact on family wholeness and the social worker needs to understand dimensions of this impact in order to play a meaningful role in dealing with this spousal conflict. Some of the different kinds of impact divorce could have on family wholeness are discussed below.

**Impact on Emotion:** The emotional stress that underpins challenges obvious in divorce can be very traumatic, to the extent of igniting health-related issues which can lead either party to function in a state of disequilibrium. All members of a family frequently experience a variety of intense feelings following a divorce, including grief, rage, sadness, and anxiety. As their family structure shifts, children may experience confusion, fear, and a sense of loss. Guardians might wrestle with sensations of culpability, disappointment, and stress. Emotional support, counselling, and resources for family members to navigate these emotional difficulties are all provided by social workers, to help set new goals and find solutions to their troubles of emotional stress (Wynstra, 2023; Paulinus, 2022; Britannica, 2020; O'Connell Corcoran, 1997).

**Physical Impact:** Family professionals should remind spouses of the long-term investment they have in each other and their children when they are preoccupied with their immediate frustrations and disappointments. Individuals who decide to divorce need to be well-informed by a social worker about the potential costs it could have for them, their partners, and their children. According to Waite and Maggie (2010), marriage researchers experience greater social isolation. The majority of dads who have been separated from their children stop having regular contact with them after a few years. Parent-child relationships strained by divorce result in children struggling to adjust to new living arrangements, parenting schedules, and family routine shifts, as well as a sense of divided parental loyalty. Social workers can help parents maintain positive relationships with their children during and after the divorce process by facilitating healthy communication and co-parenting strategies. Based on their training, social workers know that sentimental connections can help some people who are separated from adults regain their confidence and happiness; however, for others, these new sentimental connections end up leading to more prominent feelings of despair, despondency, and low self-esteem (Nordesjo, et al., 2022; Rembuluwani, & Heiletje, 2021).

**Psychological Effect:** The psychological effects of divorce on every one of the parties involved—the woman, the man and the children—can be so devastating and far-reaching that its outcome can hardly be predicted. At this stage the social workers in the social services agencies provide counselling services to the couples to help them manage the psychological effects inhibiting their well-being. According to CampBell (2017), once a woman commences a divorce case, she may feel a sense of guilt for the demise of the marriage. CampBell (2017) opined that Cindy Holbrook is right regarding her view that if there are children involved in the marriage before divorce, women may feel more pain and continue to blame themselves for being responsible for breaking up the family and causing emotional trauma to the children. Social workers assist families in establishing new routines, overcoming obstacles associated with co-parenting, and gaining access to ongoing support services during the transition period following a divorce. They might also talk about child well-being, custody arrangements, and visitation rights (O’Connell Corcoran, 1997).

**Adjustment and Well-being of Children:** Divorce can have short- and long-term effects on children's well-being and adjustment. Children's academic performance, emotional well-being, and social relationships may be affected by divorce, according to research. During this difficult transition, social workers can assess the needs of children, provide

counselling that is appropriate for their age, and work with schools to support their academic and social-emotional development. Family members going through a divorce benefit greatly from the coordination of services and interventions provided by social workers. To guarantee a comprehensive approach to addressing the numerous requirements of family members, they collaborate with other professionals like attorneys, mediators, mental health professionals, and educators (Paulinus, 2022; Britannica, 2020).

**Financial Factors to Consider:** Separate frequently brings monetary changes that can affect the prosperity of relatives. Financial instability and increased stress can result from economic strain, decreased income, and the possibility of asset loss. Social workers can help people find resources, offer financial counselling, and connect families with community services that can help them with their money problems. Family members' social support networks can be impacted by divorce. Connections to the community, extended family, and friends may change or become strained. Social workers can assist individuals and families in navigating the changes and building resilience by strengthening their social support networks, establishing new connections, and utilizing counselling or support groups. According to CampBell (2017), the fact that children from divorced families may have more externalizing issues like conduct disorders, delinquency, and impulsive behaviour than children from two-parent families is even more unfortunate, hence the role of social worker services during and after divorce cannot be overemphasised, as after a divorce, children may also encounter more conflict with peers and have more behavioural issues. In general, social workers provide crucial support and interventions to assist families in overcoming the difficulties of divorce, minimizing the detrimental effects on family unity, and facilitating the adjustment and well-being of all members of the family during and after the process (Wynstra, 2023; Paulinus, 2022; Britannica, 2020).

## **DISCUSSION**

According to several studies, the two people involved in divorce experience real physical effects when they are apart, such as depression, weight gain or loss, difficulty concentrating, increased stress, lack of sleep, dizziness, heart problems, and other real ailments. The majority of people believe that a relationship breakup only causes mental or emotional problems. That is unquestionably the case because Krueger and Hernandez (2011) asserted that divorce is undeniably a devastating event in the lives of the spouses and their children, highlighting the fact that the majority of clients in divorce issues experience feelings of hurt, fear, confusion,



sadness, and overwhelm at some point. However, there are frequent physical repercussions, such as the dropout of children from school, depression that can lead to suicide, mental health issues in some cases, and phobias in one or both spouses. On the plus side, divorce is sometimes necessary for life security. Therefore, social work services are paramount in the challenging times of divorce situations as they encompass a wide range of interventions and support provided by professional social workers to individuals, families, groups, and communities. These services aim to enhance well-being, address social issues, promote social justice, and empower individuals and communities to overcome challenges. Generally, social workers offer critical support and interventions to help families navigate the challenges of divorce, minimize negative impacts on family wholeness, and simplify the modification and well-being of all family members during and after the divorce process.

Divorce is like the elephant in the room; no matter what causes it, all parties involved (spouses and children) require professional help before, during, and after the divorce. It is critical to include the children in the divorce process both before and throughout, since including them will greatly assist them in dealing with the consequences of divorce. After divorce, you must cope with a variety of issues, including your connection with your ex, the children, your family and that of your ex, friends, and significant others, such as religious organisations. The need for social work services involvement cannot be overstated, since empathy is more important than the blame game.

## **CONCLUSION**

The devastating psychological effect of separation, which is a severe impediment to family wholeness and does not recognise the colour of one's skin, religious affiliation, or cultural background, is terrible news for anybody who may come across it or be the burden bearer. The fact is that it will always be distressing for families that failed to address the major issues that were overlooked during the marriage, issues which have now snowballed into divorce. Before and after marriage, married couples should be informed about the need to address any apparent challenges in the marriage as concerns to be brought before God in prayer. It is important to deal with any troubles in the marriage as they emerge with sincerity, and to make sure that early warning signals are not overlooked.

Family wholeness refers to the state of harmony, connection, and overall well-being within a family unit. It signifies family members' sense of belonging, mutual support, and strong bonds. To attain and maintain family wholeness, the first core value or ethical principle of social work



practice, is to assist individuals in need and strive to address their social issues. It takes consistent work, effective communication, and a commitment to mutual growth and support. While issues may happen, a healthy family unit may use its strengths, resilience, and shared values to manage them and build a feeling of togetherness and well-being among its members.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Regular efforts should be carried out to raise awareness of social work services for divorced people, as the vast majority of people are unaware of such services. Many people believe that social work services are only for the poor and children in need of assistance; social work services for divorced people should include financial emancipation for divorced people because their financial situations are negatively affected by divorce; and social work services for divorced people should not only be extended to children but should be primarily focused on the divorced couple because they are equally or even more affected by divorce.

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#### APA

Oseghale, C. O. (2024). Social Work Services and the Impact of Divorce on Family Wholeness in Nigeria. *Journal of Education, Humanities, Management and Social Sciences (JEHMSS)*, 2(2), 7-25. <https://klamidas.com/jehmss-v2n2-2024-01/>.

#### MLA

Oseghale, Christian Osemuyi. "Social Work Services and the Impact of Divorce on Family Wholeness in Nigeria". *Journal of Education, Humanities, Management and Social Sciences (JEHMSS)*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2024, pp. 7-25. <https://klamidas.com/jehmss-v2n2-2024-01/>.