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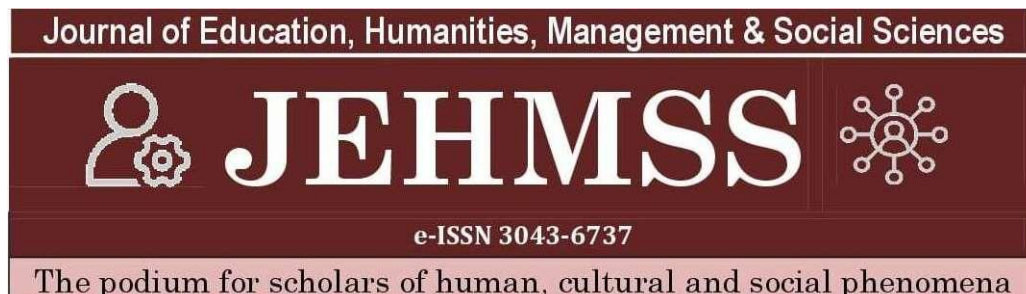
Exploring the Nexus between Corporate Culture and Employees' Retention in Private Firms in Anambra State, Nigeria

Chukwujekwu Charles Onwuka & Christian Igwebuike Ezeh

ABSTRACT

The study examined the nexus between corporate culture and employees' retention in private firms in Anambra State, Nigeria. It analyses the key variables that have been linked to success of organisational goals which refers to the ability of an organisation to retain its employees over a period of time. The study employed the descriptive research design. This study was conducted among 155 employees in ten selected private firms within the three urban centres within Anambra State, who aged between a minimum age of 27 years to a maximum age of 48 years. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire. The instrument was administered to the respondents on face-to-face basis by the principal researcher, with the help of two research assistants. Data collected from the survey were coded into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software package version 26.0, which was used in processing all the relevant data. The results of the study indicate the need for corporate culture strategies to provide equitable opportunities for skill enhancement and career progression that would foster a sense of inclusion and value among employees. The study concludes with recommendations that there is need for the organisations to strengthen their communication and feedback mechanisms by developing open communication channels, to encourage employee engagement and regularly sharing of updates on company goals and performance to build trust and ensure transparency.

Keywords: corporate culture, employees, organisation, productivity, retention

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary industrial work practices, organizations are constantly changing their organizational processes in order to meet up with the high competition in the global market. Thus, one of the key variables that have been linked to success of organizational goals amidst this competition is

employee retention, which refers to the ability of an organization to retain its employees over a period of time (Kurdi, Alshurideh & Afaishat, 2020). Onwuka, Nwokolo and Achebe (2022) stated that when employees perceive that their organisation cares and provides them all the support they require, they are more likely to commit to the achievement of their organisation's goals, which would also translate to organisational efficiency and productivity. A number of scholars have recognized employee retention as key to organizational success because when organizations succeed in retaining highly motivated employees, they put in their best efforts to help in achieving organizational goals (Kyndt et al., 2009). It is believed that when an individual has work commitment, he or she is more likely to perform tasks and responsibilities that will help an organisation achieve a goal (Onwuka, Nwokolo & Achebe, 2022). Onwuka and Abonyi (2022) are of the view that management should be able to adopt their style of leadership style to the situation and look at cues such as the type of task, the nature of the group, and other factors that might enhance employees' performance.

However, employees' retention does not occur in a vacuum; rather, it is associated with a number of variables, including work environment/atmosphere, opportunity for growth training and development, work-life balance, leadership/management style, social support system, among others (Macaraig, 2024; Shakeel & But, 2015; Kossivi, Xu & Kalgora, 2016). Among these variables, corporate culture seems to be less linked with employees' retention within the ambit of extant empirical research available. Thus, this present study aims at investigating the nexus between corporate culture and employees' retention.

Corporate culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours that characterize an organization. It is a crucial aspect of any business as it shapes the way employees interact with each other and with customers. A strong corporate culture can lead to employee satisfaction and increased productivity (Akpa, Asikhia & Nneji, 2021). There are different elements of corporate culture, and they include leadership, teamwork, communication/feedback, employee engagement/decision-making process, and innovation practices. These elements work together to create a positive environment for employees and drive organizational success. Onwuka and Abonyi (2022) observed that the success and negligence of any organization depend on the leadership style exercised by the leaders of such an organization.

Organizations which strive to cultivate positive corporate culture are more likely to retain their employees compared to organizations with lower

corporate culture. Research in Western countries has substantiated this claim by demonstrating that organizational culture has a significant influence on employee retention (Galindo, 2022; Setiawan & Hastuti, 2022). However, this assumption has not been empirically tested within the context of private firms in Anambra State, which means that there is a gap in knowledge that needs to be filled in this regard.

Research of this nature is essential as it helps organizations understand how their corporate culture impacts employee retention. It also has the potential of helping organizations identify areas where they need to improve their culture to retain employees. For instance, if it is found that employees leave or have intention of leaving because they feel undervalued or unappreciated, the organization can take steps to improve recognition programmes or offer better benefits. Moreover, research of this nature can also help organizations retain top talents by creating a positive image of their corporate culture. This will enable them to differentiate themselves from competitors in the job market.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To describe the nature of corporate culture in selected private firms in Anambra State.

2. To determine the relationship between corporate culture and employees' retention in selected private firms in Anambra State.

3. To suggest possible measures to improve corporate culture of private firms in Anambra State in order to influence employees retention.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Corporate Culture

Corporate culture is one of the important concepts within organizational practices which influences work practices and employees' behaviour within organizations. A way to define corporate organization in a proper way is to define the two concepts separately. In this direction, the concept of 'corporate' is used to represent a group of people or organizations that are united by a common purpose. Hornby (2018) noted that the word 'corporate' is associated with a large business company. Culture on the other hand is a generic term that represent the beliefs, values, customs, and practices of a social group or society. Taylor (1871, p.1) defined it as "the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society". Put together, corporate culture, therefore, refers to mutual values, views,

principles, beliefs, practices and additional features that exist within an organization, which help the organization to maintain balance and productivity (Ahmad, 2020). In addition to this, Schein (1985) as cited in Amah and Daminabo-Weje (2013, p.43) defined corporate culture as:

> The pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and integration that have worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems.

The important elements of corporate culture include: 1) leadership – which refers to the leadership style prevailing within the organization. Quality leadership sets the proper tone for the entire organization by modelling behaviours and values that are important to the organizations' success; 2) communication pattern – which refers to the system of communication that prevails within the organization. Effective communication ensures that everyone in the organization understands what is expected of them and how their work contributes to achieving organizational goals; 3) teamwork – which relates to the manner in which the employees work together as a team for the overall organizational productivity. A strong sense of teamwork fosters collaboration among employees, which leads to increased productivity and better outcomes for customers (Khawam, DiDona & Hernández, 2017); 4) Innovation – which refers to the degree of creativity which is brought into the work practices within the organization. Innovation encourages employees to think creatively and come up with new ideas that can help drive growth. These elements are essential for creating a positive corporate culture that promotes employee engagement, customer satisfaction, and overall organizational success. By prioritizing these elements, organizations can create a workplace where employees feel valued and motivated to do their best work every day. Onwuka and Abonyi (2022) are of the view that using a suitable style for a university organization is an essential requirement that should be comprehended by a leader which will go a long way in boosting employees' work performance.

Concept of Employee Retention

Employee retention is one of the important concepts in organizational behaviour and practices; it has been described as a process of minimizing employee turnover and maximizing employee satisfaction and commitment to the organization; simply put, it is an organization's ability to retain its workforce (Gorde, 2019). Shakeel and But (2015) averred that employee retention involves a planned and organized effort taken by the management of an organization to motivate and entice employees to stay with the

organization for the maximum period of time. In other words, employee retention involves continuous and planned effort taken by an organization to retain the knowledgeable, skilled and competent employees for a long period of time. Onwuka and Abonyi (2022) indicated that employee performance in an organization is an important building block which lays a foundation for improved work performance. No organization can survive in isolation, hence collective effort of all the members of the organization is required.

Overtime, scholars have measured employee retention using different quantitative indicators. One of the primary metrics for determining employee retention is turnover rate – often calculated as the number of separations divided by the average number of employees during a given period. Retention rate is yet another metrics for measuring employee retention, as it helps to provide understanding about the percentage of employees who remain with the organization over a specific period of time. Another relevant metrics is Employee Net Promoter Score (ENPS) – which gauges employee satisfaction and loyalty, which can be determined by how likely the employees are to recommend their organization to others. Onwuka, Nwokolo and Achebe (2022) observed that perceived organisational support is significant to increasing the employees' affective achievement to the organisation and their expectations that greater efforts towards meeting organisational goals will be rewarded.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

One of the important theoretical perspectives that is considered very relevant for the topic of this present research is the Social Exchange Theory (SET). SET is a transactional theory that was developed by a number of scholars within the field of Sociology, including Homans (1961), Blau (1964) and Emerson (1962). The major tenet of the theory is that people engage in social interactions with the expectation of receiving rewards and avoiding punishments. As such, individuals weigh the costs and benefits of their actions before engaging in any social exchange. This means that individuals will only engage or continue to engage in social exchanges if they believe that the benefits outweigh the costs.

Using the assumptions of this theory, it could be deduced that employees are likely to stay with an organization (employee retention) when they perceive that they are receiving benefits that outweigh the costs of staying. These benefits can include job security, opportunities for growth and development, fair compensation, a positive work environment, and importantly a flexible corporate culture. In turn, employees reciprocate by contributing to the success of the organization through their work performance.

Corporate culture plays a significant role in shaping employees' perceptions of their benefits and costs, and ultimately their willingness to continue with the organization. A positive corporate culture that values employee well-being and fosters a sense of community can increase employee satisfaction and commitment to the organization. On the other hand, a negative corporate culture characterized by poor communication, lack of trust, poor leadership style and unfair treatment can lead to high turnover rates. Consequently, the social exchange theory proposes a direct relationship between corporate culture and employee retention which is subjected to empirical test in this study using private organizations in Anambra State.

METHODS

This study was conducted in Anambra State, Nigeria, which is one of the five states in the Southeast region of Nigeria. The state shares boundaries with Delta State in the West, Imo State and Rivers State in the South, Enugu State in the East and Kogi State in the North. The indigenous ethnic group in the state is the Igbo people; they constitute 98% of the entire population of the state while 2% consists of other ethnic groups found in the state. The state hosts a large number of private corporate organizations, which makes the area suitable for the study. However, being an institutional-based research, the study was conducted in selected private organizations within the state. For the purpose of confidentiality, the identities of the selected organizations are withheld.

This study used the descriptive research design. This research design helps to describe the variables in a research by identifying patterns in variables and the relationships that occur naturally between and among them (Sousa, Driessnack & Mendes, 2007). The research design was adopted for this study based on the view that this study sought to describe the relationship between corporate culture and employees' retention. This study was conducted among 155 employees (Males = 83, Females = 122) in ten selected private firms within the three urban centres of Anambra State; the employees aged between a minimum age of 27 years to a maximum age of 48 years, with a mean age of 35.9 years. The respondents included employees of different levels including secretaries, administrative employees, machine operators, and security personnel, among others, within the selected private firms. All the respondents completed at least the secondary school level of education which is an indication that all respondent had the potential of responding effectively to the research theme. The respondents were selected through the convenience sampling technique in which respondents were selected based on their availability during the days of data collection.

The instrument for data collection was questionnaire developed based on existing literature on the study variables. The questionnaire consisted of two parts – the first part contained multiple response items which were designed to collect information on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The second part consisted of three sets of questions designed to measure the variables introduced in this study. The first set was titled 'Corporate Culture Questionnaire (CCQ)' which was used to measure the existing corporate culture in the selected private firms. It consisted of 12-items scale that measured the four dimension of corporate culture viz: employee well-being, teamwork, communication and diversity and inclusion. Each of the items were measured using three items each – making it 12 items on corporate culture. The items were designed on positively worded 7-point Likert-type response options ranging from '1' – completely false – to '5' – Very true. An example of the questions is 'This organization encourages open communication and honesty among all levels of employees', with response options of 5 – very true, 4 – true, 3 – neither true nor false, 2 – false, and 1 – completely false.

The second set in the second part of the questionnaire was titled 'Employees' Retention Questionnaire (ERQ)'. It contained 5-item scale designed to measure employees' retention within the selected private firms. The items were equally designed on negatively worded 5-point Likert scale response options ranging from '5 – strongly agree, to '1' – strongly disagree. An example of the items is 'I don't see myself working at this organization for the next 5 years or more'; with response options of 5 – strongly agree, 4 – agree, 3 – undecided, 2 – disagree, and 1 – strongly disagree. The third set in the second part of the questionnaire contained items designed to interrogate the likely measures that could be adopted to improve employees' retention within private firms in Anambra State. It contained 7 items designed on Likert-type response options ranging from 5 – very likely, to 1 – very unlikely. An example of the items is 'How likely or unlikely do you feel the following can help to improve employees' retention in your organization: i) creating a positive organizational climate', with response options of 5 – very likely, 4 – somewhat likely, 3 – undecided, 2 – unlikely, 1 – very unlikely.

The instrument was administered to the respondents on face-to-face basis by the principal researcher, with the help of two research assistants (a male and a female). First the researcher approached the management of the selected private organizations and expressed his research intentions, and to obtain relevant research approvals from them. Upon obtaining the necessary approvals, the researcher went into field with his research team on different days to collected data, a process which lasted for three weeks.

Data collected from the survey were coded into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software package version 26.0, which was used in processing all the relevant data. Actual data analysis involved first, descriptive analysis of the socio-demographic variables using frequency count and simple percentage and presented in a composite table. Thereafter, the research questions were answered using both inferential and descriptive statistical tools. While the inferential aspect employed the linear regression model to determine the relationship between the two study variables, which answers the first research question, the descriptive aspect was employed to answer the second research question.

FINDINGS

Table 1

Socio-demographic distribution of the respondents

Description of Variables	Frequency	Percent
Sex		
Males	64	41.3
Females	91	58.7
Total	155	100.0
Age		
27 - 31 years	85	54.8
32 - 36 years	20	12.9
37 - 41 years	24	15.5
42 - 46 years	23	14.8
47 - 51 years	3	1.9
Total	155	100.0
Marital Status		
Single	49	31.7
Married	69	44.6
Divorced	7	4.6
Separated	17	10.9
Widowed	13	8.2
Total	155	100
Level of Educational Attainment		
Secondary School	28	18.1
Tertiary (Diploma)	39	25.2
Tertiary (Bachelors)	62	40.0
Tertiary (post-graduate)	26	16.8
Total	155	100.0

Table 1 provides information on the result of analysis conducted on the socio-demographic variables of the respondents. The data clearly showed that the study included 155 respondents, with 64 males (41.3%) and 91 females (58.7%), indicating that females comprise the largest composition of employees in private firms in Anambra state. This gender distribution highlights the need for corporate culture initiatives that address the specific

needs and expectations of female employees, which may influence retention rates in the selected firms.

The age distribution of the respondents shows that the majority (54.8%) fell between 27 and 31 years old, reflecting a youthful workforce. Additionally, 15.5% aged between 37 to 41 years, and 23 (14.8%) were in the 42 to 46 age brackets. Fewer respondents (12.9%) and (1.9%), were in the 32 to 36 and 47 to 51 age groups, respectively. This predominance of younger employees suggests that corporate culture practices should prioritize factors such as opportunities for growth, innovation, and a vibrant workplace environment to appeal to early-career professionals, who are likely to be demotivated by the absence of these elements.

In terms of marital status, the largest proportion (44.6%) of the respondents were married, while a closer proportion (31.7%) of them were single, highlighting that the workforce in private firms within Anambra State includes a mix of individuals with varying family obligations. Smaller numbers of participants reported being separated (10.9%), widowed (8.2%), or divorced (4.6%). This diversity in marital status indicates the importance of creating corporate culture practices that support both work-life balance and flexibility, catering to employees with differing personal responsibilities.

Educational attainment among the respondents was diverse, with the largest group (40.0%), holding bachelor's degrees, followed by 25.2% of them with diploma qualifications. Additionally, 18.1% of the respondents had completed only the secondary school level, while the least proportion (16.8%) had attained up to the post-graduate level. This range of educational levels reflects a workforce with varying professional capacities and aspirations, indicating the need for corporate culture strategies to provide equitable opportunities for skill enhancement and career progression that would foster a sense of inclusion and value among employees at all educational levels.

Nature of Corporate Culture in the Selected Private Firms

The first specific objective of this study was to examine the nature of corporate culture in the selected private firms in Anambra State. To do this, questionnaire items measuring four key constructs including Diversity & Inclusion, Rewards & Recognition, Employee Well-Being, and Communication System were used to collect data. Each construct was evaluated based on three statements, with means and standard deviations calculated for individual items as well as for total scores within construct.

The analysis conducted on the responses obtained from the respondents is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Mean and Standard deviation regarding the nature of corporate culture in the selected firms

Description of Variables	n = 155	
	Mean	Std. Deviation
Diversity & Inclusion		
Promotes equal opportunities for career growth and advancement for employee irrespective of their backgrounds	2.36	1.15
Promotes and values creativity and innovation	2.85	1.47
Promotes a diverse and inclusive work environment	2.06	1.29
Total	2.42	1.30
Rewards & Recognition		
Recognizes and values employees' contributions to the organization	2.65	1.27
Rewards and recognizes employees' achievements and contribution	1.61	1.02
Treats employees fairly in terms of compensation and benefits.	2.47	1.41
Total	2.24	1.23
Employee Well-Being		
Provides adequate support for work-life balance, such as flexible working arrangements, paid leave policies, and family-friendly programs.	2.48	1.38
Provides adequate support for employees to managing workplace stress (such as breaks, leave, flexible work hour)	3.08	1.24
Has policies and practices that takes into account employees' mental health	2.08	1.35
Total	2.55	1.32
Communication System		
Encourages open communication and honesty among all levels of employees	2.31	1.19
Has an efficient feedback system that allows employees the opportunity to express their experiences with various aspects of company culture, policies, or management practices	2.77	1.44
Provides updates and information regarding company performance, changes, or strategic direction	2.55	1.16
Total	2.54	1.26
Grand Total	**2.44**	**1.28**

As shown in Table 2, the mean scores for the items measuring Diversity & Inclusion indicate a low perception of effectiveness in promoting an inclusive environment. Specifically, the item 'Promotes a diverse and work environment' had the lowest mean score (M = 2.06, SD = 1.29), suggesting that respondents feel this aspect is poorly addressed within their organizations. The overall mean for the Diversity & Inclusion construct was M = 2.42 (SD = 1.30), further confirming a perception of inadequacy in fostering equal opportunities for career advancement and valuing creativity.

In terms of Rewards & Recognition, the mean scores also reflect a lack of effectiveness. The item 'Rewards and recognizes employees' achievements

and contributions' received the lowest mean score of M = 1.61 (SD = 1.01), indicating significant gap in recognizing employee achievements within the selected firms. The total mean for this construct was M = 2.24 (SD = 1.23), suggesting that employees feel undervalued in their contributions to the organization, which could negatively impact motivation, job satisfaction and overall job retention.

The findings regarding Employee Well-Being suggest variability in the perception of support provided by organizations. The item 'Provides adequate support for employees to manage workplace stress' had highest mean score (M = 3.08, SD = 1.24), indicating employees feel relatively supported in managing stress compared to other areas. However, the overall mean for Employee Well-Being was M = 2.55 (SD = 1.32), highlighting that while some support exists, it is still perceived as inadequate, particularly regarding mental health policies (M = 2.08, SD = 1.35).

Finally, the Communication System construct yielded a total mean score M = 2.54 (SD = 1.26), indicating moderate perception of communication effectiveness within the selected private firms. The item 'Encourages open communication and honesty among all levels of' received a mean score of M = 2.31 (SD = 1.19), suggesting that there are significant barriers to open dialogue within the workplace. The item 'Has an efficient feedback system' had a higher (M = 2.77, SD = 1.44), showing some positive feedback regarding opportunities for employees to express their experiences.

Overall, the grand mean and standard deviation indicate that employees in the selected private firms perceive various aspects of corporate culture specifically Diversity & Inclusion, Rewards & Recognition, Employee-Being, and Communication Systems—as inadequate (M = 2.44, SD = 1.28). The low mean scores across the four constructs suggest that there is substantial room for improvement in fostering a supportive and inclusive corporate culture in private firms within Anambra State.

Relationship between corporate culture and employees' retention

Another important interest of this study was to examine whether a relationship exist between the corporate culture within the selected private firms and employees' job retention. The analysis in this respect was done by cross tabulating the data obtain in relation to employees' job retention with that of corporate culture, and using the regression analysis to test the relationship. The result of this test is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Regression model showing the relationship between corporate culture and employee retention

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.407[a]	.166	.143	3.05025

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	277.233	4	69.308	7.449	.000[b]
	Residual	1395.605	150	9.304		
	Total	1672.839	154			

Coefficients[a]						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	18.172	1.278		14.220	.000
	diversity. Compute	-.500	.102	-.435	-4.892	.000
	rewards. Compute	.071	.130	.046	.543	.588
	wellbeing. Compute	.292	.126	.213	2.311	.022
	communication. Compute	-.037	.117	-.026	-.313	.755

a. Dependent Variable: retention. Compute
b. Predictors: (Constant), communication. Compute, diversity. Compute, rewards. Compute, wellbeing. Compute

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between corporate culture constructs (diversity and inclusion, rewards and recognition, employee well-being, and communication systems) and employee retention in selected private firms Anambra State. The regression model indicated a moderate positive correlation between the corporate culture and employee retention, ($F(4, 150) = 7.449$, $p < .001$), with a coefficient of determination ($R^2 = .166$), suggesting that approximately 16.6% of variance in employee retention can explained by the corporate culture constructs included in the model.

Analysis of the coefficients showed that 'Diversity and Inclusion' (B = -0.500) was statistically significant($p < .001$), indicating that an increase in diversity and inclusion is associated with a decrease in employee retention ($\beta = -0.435$). In other words, if the corporate culture of the firms is favourable towards diversity and inclusion, the employees are more likely to remain with the firms. The result however showed that the coefficient for 'Rewards and Recognition' (B = 0.071) was not statistically significant ($p = .588$), suggesting that rewards and recognition do not have a meaningful impact on employee retention.

On the other hand, the coefficient for 'Employee Well-being' (B = 0.292) was statistically significant (p = .022), implying that a positive relationship exists between the construct and employee retention (β = 0.213). This suggests that improved employee well-being is associated with higher retention rates. Finally, 'Communication Systems' (B = -0.037) was not statistically significant (p = .755), indicating that communication systems do not significantly affect employee retention.

Conclusion/Recommendations

The major aim of this research was to explore the nexus between corporate culture and employee retention, with specific focus on private firms in Anambra State Nigeria. Through the in-depth analysis conducted on the data gathered from the field, the study has been able to substantiate that there is a poor corporate culture within private firms in Anambra State, judging from the low mean scores obtained in relation to the key constructs of corporate culture introduced in this research viz: diversity, recognition, employee well-being, and communication. Organizations can cultivate more positive work environments, leading to enhanced employee satisfaction and retention. These changes not only benefit employees but also contribute to the overall success and sustainability of the organization in a competitive business landscape. The integration of recent academic research findings emphasizes the critical nature of these interventions for fostering a thriving organizational culture. Based on the foregoing, the following recommendations were provided:

1. Corporate organizations in Anambra state should consider improving in their reward systems by establishing structured recognition programmes, such as awards or bonuses, to celebrate employee achievements and reinforce their value to the company.

2. There is also the need to enhance their employee well-being by introducing flexible working arrangements, such as remote work or adjustable schedules, to help employees manage their work-life balance.

3. Corporate organizations should also provide mental health resources, wellness initiatives, and supportive leave policies which can significantly boost morale and retention.

4. Finally, there is need for the organizations to strengthen their communication and feedback mechanisms by developing open communication channels to encourage employee engagement; and regularly sharing updates on company goals and performance to build trust and ensure transparency.

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CITING THIS ARTICLE

Dance Music in Igbo Culture: A Study of Akubumma Cultural Dance of Uli

Modestus Chimezie Abaliwu

Abstract

One of the most captivating traditional music genres in Igbo culture is dance music. In Igbo land, the organisation and performance of dance music reflects a community's beliefs, orientation and the purpose necessitating the music and the dance. Basically, dance music is utilized by folk groups as a way of showcasing and strengthening their cultural identity and oneness as well as a means of celebrating events of customary or social relevance. In Uli, there are various dance music types; they include those for individuals and groups, women, children, youths and elderly men and women. This study is focused on the activities of Akubumma Cultural Dance, a dance music type performed by the folk men of Umuoma community in Uli, Anambra State. The study covers the organisation and performance techniques of the dance. Data collected for the study emerged from the field work undertaken by the researcher as well as from secondary sources. The result of the research indicates that traditional music is one of the foundational aspects of Igbo culture, one that should be sustained by ensuring its intergenerational transmission through the involvement of children and youths in dance music development and performances. The study recommends that the performance of traditional music should be made a major entertainment feature of various communal festivities and events in order to reinforce its value as a unifying and health-enhancing cultural expression.

Keywords: dance music, Igbo culture, Akubumma, Uli

Introduction

Igbo people are found mostly in the South Eastern part of Nigeria. They constitute the overwhelming majority of Nigerians dwelling in Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi and Imo States. A sizable number of Igbo-speaking people are also found in Rivers and Delta States. The Igbo are very industrious; they are seen as agents of development wherever they dwell, be it within or outside Igbo land. Okafor (2005:26) observes that "Igbo people are basically farmers, traders and craftsmen". Generally, they do well in

whatever business venture they undertake. They use traditional music and dance to celebrate rites of passage and to display their cultural heritage.

Agu in Okpala (2016:49) affirms that in African societies, all aspects of life, ranging from birth to death, are believed to be integrated with music making. Music is featured in all cultural activities in Igbo land. Besides its entertainment and aesthetic values, music serves as mark of identity and unity that tie the people together. Euba in Okpala (2016:96) states that music is a powerful tool that encourages unity among people irrespective of their age and social status.

On the nature and interconnectedness of music and dance in a traditional African setting, Nwachukwu (2024) states:

> In African culture, music and dance are two inseparable cultural elements that complement each other. From the rhythmic beats of the diverse traditional instruments to the heterophonic African music and the jaw-dropping dance movements, music and dance have been an integral part of the African heritage for centuries. Both elements are deeply rooted in the expressive nature of African culture, where movement and rhythm synchronize to create a dynamic art form... In most African cultures, the connection between music and dance remains unbreakable because they share a common purpose of celebrating culture, life, heritage, and communal living.

Music performance groups are organized by people in some kind of social relationship among the Igbo communities. The performance groups may be organized at clan, age grade, church, or village levels or they may be organised by either male or female groups to meet social and cultural demands of the people. Dance music is one of the most beautiful traditional music forms in Igbo culture. *Akubumma* Cultural Dance is dance music organized by the men folk of Umuoma village, Uli. Their principal goal is to encourage unity, progress and love in the community by participating and sharing in communal experiences.

Historical Background of Uli People

Uli is in Ihiala Local GovernmentArea of Anambra State. Oral tradition traces the origin of Uli to Ogidi, one of the communities in Idemili Local Government Area of Anambra State. According to this source, Ogidi had many children. At one time in the distant past, one of his sons called Achara left his father's home in search of a new settlement. When he came to the present day Ihiala Local Government Area, he settled there. At Oduga, where Achara founded a new settlement, he married Ugwoaku from Awoidemili. This woman gave birth to nine children but only four of them

named Okija, Ihiala, Uli, and Ihembosi, who are today part of the communities in Ihiala Local Government Area, survived. Because these four communities descended from Achara, the son of Ogidi, they often times refer to themselves as the sons of Achara Ogidi.

Udeagu (1987) discussing the history of Uli, stated that Achara left Ogidi due to death of his parents and brothers who had offended one deity called *Ogba*. For fear that he might also die at Ogidi, he decided to find a new settlement elsewhere. However, his half-brothers remained at Ogidi, and nothing happened to them. The fact was that it was Achara's mother who provoked the *Ogba* deity, so when *Ogba* sent death as punishment, it was only Achara's brothers and mother that were affected. However, after Achara's departure from Ogidi, he still remembered his relationship with the other sons of Ogidi. One implication of this was that none of the descendants of Achara could marry from Ogidi; in recent times, however, they started to inter-marry.

Achara's four surviving children were farmers. At a time, they had a serious land dispute which resulted in separation among them, They moved to different locations. Okija, the senior one, moved to the *Urasi* river area and founded a new settlement there. Ihiala moved to *Ugwuororonwanne* where he settled after waging wars with the occupants of the place. Ihembosi moved to the area called Apani which is along the present Ozubulu-Nnewi road. He founded the settlement known today as Ihembosi. Uli moved from Oduga to Akaba which was an open land with *Ukpaka* trees all over. He settled there as a farmer, but the place was not fertile. For this reason, he left Akaba and moved to Mputu which was more fertile. There he founded a permanent settlement which is today known as Uli community. Uli got married and had three sons, namely Eziama, Aku, and Oma. It was through these three sons that Uli's genealogy continued uninterrupted until twenty-five villages that formed Uli today had emerged. Uli, therefore, is a community founded by Achara, a notable farmer from Ogidi (Udeagu 1987:24).

At present, Uli is an autonomous community that has produced notable men and women. Uli people participate in a number of cultural activities that bind them together. Just like other Igbo communities, music is an integral part of culture in Uli.

The Concept of Dance Music

Onyekwelu in Okpala (2016) defines dance as "a response of physical body to the stimulus of organized sound". Mackrell in Albert (2019:198) defines dance as "the movement of the body in a rhythmic way, usually to music

and within a given space, for the purpose of expressing an idea or emotion, releasing energy or simply taking delight in the movement itself". He further states that "dance is powerful impulse challenged by skilful performers into something that becomes intensely expressive and that may delight spectators who feel no wish to dance themselves" (p.189). The above submission by Mackrell is correct because there should be a kind of music that stimulates one to dance. From the above, it is clear that dance is inseparable from music. Dance is a sequence of rhythmic steps or movements usually performed to music, for pleasure or as a form of social interaction.

Okpala (2016:98) observes two aspects of dance, namely, the free medley and stylized dance. Discussing further, she states that: "the free medley dance is seen as a powerful impulse that requires individuals' freedom in its composition and movement. The stylized dance is a skilfully choreographed art practiced largely by a professional. It requires fixed choreographical patterns and sequence with varying signs of aesthetic communication". *Akubumma* cultural dance is a free medley dance performed by the male folk of Umuoma village, Uli.

Music and dance are aspects of culture in Igbo that impact much on the life of the people. They are widely practiced by every community in Igbo land. Dance music seems to be the most captivating music genre engaged in by many cultures. However, studies by some scholars have shown that there are some music ensembles that do not include dance in their performance. But that which involves dance are far greater in number. Nketia in Okpala (2016:98) notes that although purely contemplative music, which is not designed for dance drama, is practised in African society in restricted contexts, the cultivation of music that is integrated with dance or music that stimulates affective motor response is more prevalent.

Dance music has different categories as observed by Okpala (2016) in Okpala (2021); she states that dance music could be viewed in three categories, namely, instrumental dance, vocal dance, and the combination of both vocal and instrumental dance (p.17). The vocal or instrumental parts produce the rhythm which the dancers dance to, and this demonstrates that without vocal or instrumental music, dance will be insignificant. This aligns with Onwuka (2012) which states that dance cannot be meaningfully performed without music. He further notes that "dance is stimulated and accompanied by appropriate music which makes the wonderful art of traditional performance spirit-lifting and edifying" (p.2). The dance group in this study is an instrumental dance group.

The Organization of Akubumma Cultural Dance

The awareness of the historical background of any musical ensemble is required in order to grasp its performance and functionality. Igbo communities practised music borrowing and they are still practising it today, especially in Uli town. The music under discussion was borrowed from Orsu-Ihiteukwa of Imo State in 1989. They discovered the dance from an event they went to at Orsu-Ihiteukwa and they decided to borrow it from them. After discovering it, they invited Orsu-Ihiteukwa people and made their motive known to them. The owners of the dance gave them their requirement which they partially fulfilled, as agreed. The training lasted for about two years due to lack of funds to enable them fulfil all the demands of the Orsu-Ihiteukwa people.

The establishment of *Akubumma* cultural dance in Umuoma Uli was to accomplish their desire to:

- Foster unity and progress in their village.

- Have a sustainable village identity.

- Entertain people during functions like ceremonies, festivals and other cultural and social events in Umuoma, Uli town and environs.

- Contribute in the development of their village and community through the money realised by the group.

The group started with about twelve members who financed the long period of training. The training took a long time because the members were few in number and had inadequate financial resources. But at the completion of the training, the dance came out in glory at Ogbuehi Ernest Mbaekposi's compound (Ezeudo), where the first public outing (*ibuputeegwu)* took place. He was the Chairman of the group at that time.

Some members of the group were elected into leadership positions to improve the smooth running of the group. This aligns with Onwuka (2012) who posits that a typical Nigerian traditional or contemporary dance group consists of elected members who are functionaries, expressive artistes or attendants. They also appointed *ndinna-egwu* and *nne-egwu* (patrons and patronesses).

Criteria for Recruitment of New Members

The recruitment of new members into *Akubumma* cultural dance group is via interview with prospective members. There is no monetary implication

neither is there any ritual to be performed. However, new members are required to bring one carton of Life beer which the old members will drink to mark the acceptance of the new members. There is no age limit in the recruitment of new members; with this, the group has been functional till date. The group involves children, youths and old people in their musical activities, and this has kept the group alive, notwithstanding the influence of Western culture over the younger ones in the society. Okpala (2016:100) has noted that "most traditional music ensembles are at the verge of facing total extinction because of the lack of interest of the younger generation in their traditional music activities". She further explains that some music groups are no more functional because the people that initiated them are no more or have grown too old to continue with their musical activities.

Prospective members who are known to be dishonest are not allowed to join the group. Approved new members join the group during its monthly meeting or whenever it has emergency training sessions.

Venue and Periods of Rehearsals

When the group was formed, the rehearsal venue was at Ogbuehi Ernest Mbaekposi's compound. After his death, the venue of the group's rehearsals was shifted to Nze Micheal Onyebuo's compound (*Nzeakonobi*).

The choice of Nze Michael Onyebuo's compound as the place of rehearsals was because he is the current chairman of the group and it is in their law that the venue of rehearsals will be the chairman's house. Some researchers are, however, of the opinion that the venue of rehearsals should be chosen based on the centrality of the place. *Akubumma* cultural dance group has no specific day for rehearsals. They rehearse on the eve of the day before any event they are invited to.

Costumes

Costumes form part of the movement complex in dance. Agu (2001) posits that "costumes are carefully selected to portray the mood of the music and also to transmit the message of the group to the audience" (p.120). Costumes add beauty to dance performance. In *Akubumma* cultural dance group, local materials are used for their costumes, except the foot wear. The group has one type of costume for the dancers and a different one for the instrumentalists and other members.

The dancers usually wear wood-carved face masks which they use to cover their face while dancing. This is in line with what Nze Micheal Onyebuo said during an oral interview that "in the olden days before the

independence, children wore wood-carved face mask to entertain elderly and wealthy men; this is part of African culture" (27-8-2023).

The wood-carved face mask costumes include the ones for the father, the mother and their daughter. Each play vital roles during any performance. The three dancers wear lace, wood-carved face masks, and leg rattle, hand gloves, a pair of flat canvas and a chieftaincy cap designed with green, black and white colours.

The costume of the dancers

Performance Situation of *Akubumma* Cultural Dance

The performance of *Akubumma* cultural dance is based on invitation to both sacred and secular functions. They perform not only in Uli, but within the neighbouring towns and outside the State.

Akubumma is a respectable, mobile cultural dance that combines both the free medley dance and the stylized dance pattern. The dancers are only three in number, and comprise of the father, the mother, and the daughter, as earlier mentioned. The fatherly wood-carved face mask plays the role of father in the dance. He doesn't dance much, his work is to protect his wife but sometimes he dances an energetic dance to show that he is the father of the dance. The motherly wood-carved face mask takes the lead dancer role which makes the dance and the atmosphere very unique and memorable. The child wood-carved face mask signify that children are also welcome into the group and that children can dance the dance steps very well, as displayed in every performance. *Akubumma* is a dramatised dance ensemble that represents the activities in the family. During performance, the instrumentalists and other members move into the performance arena, they play to entertain the audience and get the environment charged.

The flutist plays a very important role but has no specific position. He calls out the dancers at the appropriate time; once the dancers appear, both the instrumentalists and other members move round with them in the performance arena.

The group performing in an event

The coming out of the tree dancers is in hierarchy: the father dancer will come out first, followed by the mother and then the child. They dance to the rhythm of the music played by the instrumentalists. The flautist plays some melodic phrases, which other instrumentalists respond to. There is no stopping of dancing or instrumentation until they leave the performance arena.

Instruments of the Dance

Okpala (2016) states that "the selection of musical instruments by African music ensemble is done based on the orientation of the group" (p.106). Agu (2000:80) opines that "the function and utility of the music performed by the group determines the size and composition of the instruments to be used by any group". *Akubumma* cultural dance is a mobile group, they use little musical instruments they could carry around while performing. Their instruments are made up of three membrane drums: *okeigba, nwunyeigba,* and *nwaigba*. The membrane used in making the drums is that of *mgbada* (gazelle). Other instruments of the group are *udu* (musical pot), *okpokolo* (wooden block), *ogene* (metal gong), and *oja* (local flute).

Role of Dance Music in Igbo Culture

Music and dance play prominent roles in preserving the culture of its owners and in shaping the lives of the people positively. Oriloye (2011)

notes that "Music and dance appeal to the emotions". They enhance group feelings and solidarity (p.16). Music and dance are also used for communication. They send messages across to people. Despite the emerging influence of Western culture in Igbo traditional music, cultural dances like the *Atilogwu, Egedege,Mkpokiti* and many more still exist; this is possible because of the cultural roles they play. Music is an indispensable part of the Igbo culture. Its impact in the life of the people cannot be over emphasized. Dance music events are, therefore, appropriate occasions for assessing the social life of any community.

Conclusion

Music performance is so much a part of everyday life in Uli that there are lots of musical ensembles found among the people. There are different types of music genres performed by the different categories of musical groups in Uli, ranging from children to adult groups. This agrees with the view of Agu in Okpala (2016) that Nigerians are great lovers of music who create and perform music to enrich every activity, ranging from birth to death. All musical creations serve specific purposes and all performances are carefully chosen to fit specified functions and activities appropriately (p.97). Agu further observes that:

Music and musical activities have been seen as an important aspect of every culture. There exists well established musical tradition in all Nigerian cultures. And every ethnic community has some guidelines and well established norm as regards its musical activities and practices (p.106).

This study has portrayed dance music as an indispensable part of culture in Igbo communities and in Uli in particular. Through music and dance, the social life of the people is enhanced and the bond that holds them together is made stronger. *Akubumma* dance ensemble is an outstanding dance group that the owners are very proud of.

This study recommends that the *Akubumma* dance ensemble should include more young people in their activities, as this will contribute to the continuous existence of the group. The researcher encourages other dance music groups to do same. This study also recommends that the performance of traditional music groups should be actively encouraged in various Igbo communities and should involve the younger generation who should be able to carry on when the elderly members of the group pass on.

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Fuel Subsidy Removal and the Agony of the Deprived in Nigeria

Livinus Nwaugha & Ihezie Solomon Okekwe

Abstract

Increase in the price of premium motor spirit (PMS) has always been a source of panic to the average Nigerian as it usually has a multiplier and inflationary effect that reduces the purchasing power of most Nigerians, especially the poor. A major reason for the concern is that most vehicles used in transporting commuters, goods and services in Nigeria are PMS-powered, and any increase in the price of PMS (petrol) directly and immediately translates to increase in the price of virtually all commodities and services. To limit the ripple effects of PMS price increase, government after government in Nigeria had been exercising control over how much consumers were asked to pay for PMS at the filling stations. Since the 1977 price control act, the federal government had been fixing the price of PMS to prevent the forces of demand and supply from swaying inordinately against consumers. However, owing to the massive corruption that characterized government's subsidization of PMS, and the attendant financial losses borne by government over the years, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, in his inauguration speech on May 29, 2023, announced the removal of fuel subsidy, thereby provoking a nationwide outcry against the decision. This paper examines fuel subsidy removal and the agony of the deprived in Nigeria as well as the history of fuel price increases in Nigeria. The paper examines vital issues connected with fuel subsidy in Nigeria. A mixed method of data collection was adopted for the paper: relevant data were obtained from 30 respondents who were purposively selected and interviewed while other data were sourced from extant literature. The paper revealed that putting an end to oil subsidy so that the forces of demand and supply would be determining the price of PMS is not a bad policy but that government should have put in place remedial measures to cushion the effect of the subsidy removal on the masses.

Keywords: fuel subsidy removal, agony, deprived, corruption, government

Introduction

Nigeria is a nation blessed with human and natural resources. Its diverse but fertile soil types are ideal for the production of various kinds of farm produce, including highly-demanded cash crops. Its climatic and topographic diversity makes it very suitable for other forms of agricultural endeavours, such as the breeding of livestock and fishing, and for agro-

based ventures, such as hides and skin processing. Nigeria's stockpile of mineral resources includes, among several others, petroleum, gas, limestone, tin and iron ore. Before independence in 1960, Nigeria was reputed as a major exporter of cocoa, palm oil, groundnut, millet and cotton, and these, together with tin, constituted its major foreign-exchange earners (Akindele, 1988:103). This was the period adequate attention was paid to agriculture. The then regions, Northern, Western and Eastern regions, were distinctly marked and known by their agricultural output. The Northern region was the major producer of groundnut, millet, pepper, maize and cattle. Cocoa was the Western region's cash crop, and through its cultivation the Western region was able to drive its economic development and growth; it built the impressive Cocoa House and the first television station in sub-Saharan Africa. The Eastern region was the major cultivator of palm oil and through it initiated several developmental projects in the region.

In 1956 crude oil was discovered in large quantities at Olobiri in south-southern Nigeria, but became prominent as a major foreign-exchange earner in the 1970s. Before the 1970s agriculture was Nigeria's main foreign revenue earner (Akindele, 1988). According to Atemie (1996), agriculture constituted 73% of Nigeria's foreign-exchange earnings. But by the 1970s, Nigeria's oil sector had taken the center stage as the mainstay of the economy, giving rise to the oil boom that characterized that petro-dollar economy (Akindele, 1988:113). The emergence of the petro-dollar economy disrupted and distorted Nigeria's agricultural economy (Adubi, 2004).

During the oil boom era, the naira was among the world's strongest currencies; from the 1970s to the early 1980s, one US dollar exchanged for less than one naira. This exchange rate advantage could not last because Nigerians abandoned agriculture in search of oil-boom contracts, jobs and mercantile ventures. Along with that, Nigeria embarked upon massive importation of goods, many of which could have been locally produced; in no time Nigeria became one of the world's largest importers of wheat, rice, household products, cosmetics, clothing materials, and diverse vehicles and generators, to name but a few. As Nigeria was importing almost everything while exporting virtually nothing else but crude oil, undue pressure was put on Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings. This situation was not helped by Nigeria's indebtedness to foreign financial institutions and organisations who ultimately pressurized it into adopting, in the mid 1980s, the structural adjustment programme (SAP) that ultimately led to the devaluation of the naira against major Western currencies, principally the US dollar.

Overview of Naira's Exchange-Rate Oscillations

The devaluation of the naira signaled a distortion in the economy and a

general fall in the living standard of Nigerians, a situation which was exacerbated by increase in the rate of unemployment and the rate of violent crime. All of these were aggravated by systemic maladministration and corruption at federal, state and local government levels. The international angle to naira's devaluation was and remains the fact that oil is mostly bought and exchanged in US dollar, so any variation in the value of the US dollar automatically impacted on the price of oil in the international market. In spite of this, Nigeria's bad domestic economic policies should be largely blamed for the country's economic woes, including the continuous devaluation of the naira since the 1980s. For example, according to sparkgist.com, by 1986 one US dollar was equal to 90 kobo but as at 1997 one dollar was equal to ₦105. As at February 2024, more than ₦1,500 was exchanged for one US dollar at the black market.

Exchange rate in the international market is subject to constant fluctuations; this is why many countries fix the exchange rate of their local currencies against the world's major currencies for basic economic reasons (Jhingan, 2009). The exchange rate of a country's currency vis-à-vis major currencies, like Euro, pounds sterling, and the Japanese Yen, plays a great role in stabilizing its economy. Hence, nations have continued to make policies that strengthen their currencies; despite these policies, currency exchange rates fluctuate in the international market as the value of the US dollar, the overriding currency of international transactions, increases or decreases (Jhingan, 2009).

Factors that are responsible for exchange rate oscillation can be broadly grouped into two: internal and external factors. The internal factors occur when a country, through its deliberate economic policy, decides to lower its exchange rate in the form of devaluation in order to make its commodities in the international market cheaper than other countries' commodities; comparative considerations could also make a country increase the value of its currency. External factors come into play when the exchange rate rise or fall is caused by global economic conditions, such as recession or global instability caused by, for instance, war or outbreak of a devastating pandemic.

The importance of the US dollar to Nigeria's economy cannot be overemphasized. Nigeria's major export commodities are valued in the international market in USD, and most times Nigerians seem to believe that they do not have any direct influence on the fluctuation of NGN-USD rate. This may not be totally true. For example, when the naira was introduced on January 1, 1973, to replace the Nigerian pound, £1 = ₦2, according to CBN records. At that time the Nigerian economy was stable, the decline of

Nigeria's agricultural sector had started but many were still into farming, and Nigeria was not an indebted country. When Nigerians, especially the youth, largely abandoned agriculture in subsequent years and migrated to the cities in search of greener pastures, the country became almost totally reliant on oil. There was a notable energy crisis which affected the fortunes of Oil Producing and Exporting Countries (OPEC), one of which was Nigeria. Overwhelmed by many elephant projects and programmes, one of which was FESTAC '77 extravaganza, Nigeria began to borrow from the International Monetary Fund (IMF); by the 1980s, Nigeria had become one of the world's most indebted countries, a status which forced it to adopt SAP in 1986.

The decline of the Nigerian economy led to the decline of the naira. By 1999, when Nigeria's current democratic dispensation began, $1 = ₦85.95. While we may blame the military for mismanaging the Nigerian economy, and consequently the naira, the table below, which captures the dwindling fortunes of the naira under the watch of civilian politicians, indicates that Nigerian leaders, both military and civilian, have proved to be incapable of solving Nigeria's economic problems. Below is a table which captured the slide of the naira from the year 2000 to 2024. The data provided in the table are authentic as they are similar to those stated in an independent table published in Twitter by Abubakar (2024).

Table 1: **Dollar-Naira Exchange Rates from 2000 to 2024**

Year	US Dollar	Naira
2000	1	85.95
2001	1	99 – 106
2002	1	109 – 113
2003	1	114 – 127
2004	1	127 – 130
2005	1	132 – 136
2006	1	128 – 131
2007	1	120 – 125
2008	1	115 – 120
2009	1	145 – 171
2010	1	148 – 154
2011	1	151 – 165
2012	1	155 – 161
2013	1	153 – 162
2014	1	170 – 199
2015	1	199 – 300
2016	1	300 – 320
2017	1	400 – 368
2018	1	360
2019 – 2023	1	365 – 600
2024	1	600 – 1600

Source: https://www.sparkgist.com

Nigeria's Oil Production and Refining Woes

Between 1978 and 1989, Nigeria established three refineries in Port Harcourt, Warri and Kaduna to make oil accessible and available to the local market as well as for export (nigeriatradehub 2024). These refineries were the drivers of the oil economy in Nigeria from the late 1970s to 2002. When the Port Harcourt refinery was completed, it had a capacity of 100,000 Bpsd; Warri refinery was completed and commissioned in 1978 with a production capacity of 100,000 Bpsd. Also in 1980, Kaduna refinery was completed and commissioned with production capacity of 50,000 Bpsd (Oaikhena, 2004).

By 2002, as investment in agriculture further declined, Nigeria's oil industry provided 98% of the country's foreign exchange earnings. Through this singular indicator Nigeria became a mono economy. In the 1990s, during the military era, oil production capacity declined as a result of poor governance, pipeline vandalisation and upsurge of resource control issues. This continued even after the return to democratic rule in 1999. By 2002, pipeline vandalisation and kidnapping (to extort ransom) had become the order of the day in the Niger Delta region. The militancy degenerated to a war-like situation following the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight Ogoni activists by the Abacha administration in 1995.

The Niger Delta, in spite of being the region where the bulk of Nigeria's oil is extracted, has continued to experience environmental degradation and abject poverty caused mainly by the multinational oil companies, especially Shell BP, operating there. It was the abysmal state of the region that ignited the spirit of militancy which drew the attention of the government and the international community to the plight of the people of the region. The region's different militant groups include Egbesu Boys, Niger Delta Volunteer Force and Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), to mention but a few (CEDCOMS, 2003). The activities of these militant groups, at a point, nearly crippled the Nigerian economy as oil production reduced from 2.2 million barrels per day to 700,000 barrel per day in 2007. Even as at February 2024, due partly to the activities of militants, Nigeria's average daily crude oil production dropped to 1.32 million barrels per day (bpd). This amounted to 105,000 bpd or 7.36 percent decrease from the 1.42 million bpd recorded in January 2024 (thecable.ng, 2024).

Chronicle of Fuel Price Increases and their Ripple Effects in Nigeria

The price of PMS has always been a source of concern to the average Nigerian as its increase or decrease has multiplier effects that affect the

economic wellbeing of the citizens (Umoru, 2022). The reason is that most of the transportation system in Nigeria depends largely on PMS to power their vehicles, and any increase in PMS gives rise to increases in the prices of other commodities, including the prices of foodstuff and essential items that the poor and the under-privileged mostly depend on. This is why PMS price increases aggravate the condition of the downtrodden and increase the poverty level of the masses (Umoru, 2022:34). Below is a table of PMS price increases from 1999 to 2024.

Table 2: **The Changing Prices of PMS from 1999 to 2024**

Year	PMS Price per Litre
1999	₦20
2000	₦30
2002	₦26
2003	₦42
2004	₦50 – ₦65
2007	₦75 – ₦65
2014	₦141 – ₦97
2016	₦145
2017	₦200
2018	₦148
2020	₦165
2022	₦220 – ₦250
2024	₦620 – ₦700

Sources: Zaccheaus Tunde Egbewole , Bolaji Aluko, Ike Okwuobi, and Umoru

To show how an increase in PMS price affects the prices of other commodities in the market in Nigeria, let us see how the prices of two common food items (rice and bread) changed each time the price of PMS (as reflected in the above table) changed between 2014 to 2024. In 2014, when the price of PMS was ₦97 (there was a brief period of subsidy removal that shut up the price of PMS to ₦141 before a series of demonstrations forced back the price to ₦97), the price of a bag of rice ranged from ₦7000 to ₦8000 while a loaf of family-size bread cost ₦450. By 2016 to 2017, when the price of PMS was between ₦145 to ₦200, the price of a bag of rice was ₦39,000 to ₦40,000 while a loaf of family-size bread cost ₦750. Also by 2023 to 2024, when the price of PMS was ₦620 to ₦700, a bag of rice was sold between ₦50,000 to ₦75,000 while family-size bread cost ₦1000 to ₦1400. So, there is no doubt that an increase in PMS price influences the price of other commodities in the country.

History of Fuel Subsidy Removal in Nigeria

Fuel subsidy removal is a deliberate government policy to allow the forces of demand and supply determine the price of petroleum products in the market. However, the removal of fuel subsidy is a violation of 1977 Price Control Act (PCA) that mandates government to fix price of certain commodities in Nigeria, including petroleum products. The aim of fuel subsidy removal is to deregulate the price of fuel (PMS), especially as government can no longer cushion the effect of fuel subsidy now that it is faced with dire economic disequilibrium and paucity of funds caused by endemic corruption, racketeering and lack of transparency that characterized fuel subsidy management in Nigeria since the 1970s.

Moves to remove fuel subsidy in Nigeria date back to 1988 when Nigeria was faced with dire economic crisis that led to the devaluation of the naira and other economic liberalization measures. However, all the earlier moves to remove fuel subsidy could not materialize as a result of opposition from the labour unions and civil society gtoups in Nigeria. A major move to remove fuel subsidy was made in 2012 by President Goodluck Jonathan who introduced SURE-P to help cushion the suffering the removal of fuel subsidy might cause the masses.

SURE-P was a conscious government effort to re-inject the resources previously injected into fuel subsidy to other critical areas of the economy that would impact positively on the lives of the people. Government felt that the fraud that marked the fuel subsidy regime was endemic and that, if left unchecked, it might cripple the economy, especially as major oil marketers were engaged in diversion of petroleum products. It was to contain this market racketeering and diversion that President Jonathan assured Nigerians that with the removal of fuel subsidy other economic sectors would have enough fund that would create employment and reduce poverty –one of the cardinal objectives of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). But the move to remove fuel subsidy was vehemently opposed by opposition parties and civil society groups. They said the move was sinister and anti-people, if not a total scam, and supported nationwide 'occupy Nigeria' protesters who besieged public places and government establishments.

In 2016, the Buhari administration cited endemic corruption and market racketeering as some of the reasons which might necessitate the removal of fuel subsidy; for lack of political will the regime dilly-dallied until May 29th 2023 when it handed power to Bola Ahmed Tinubu as president.

During his inauguration as the 16th president of Nigeria on May 29, 2023, President Ahmed Bola Tinubu bade farewell to fuel subsidy with his famous 'fuel subsidy is gone mantra' statement. He regarded fuel subsidy as a cankerworm that had eaten deep into the fabric of the economic fortune of

Nigeria, something that must go if there must be any tangible forward leap for Nigeria's transformation. The president adumbrated that Nigeria spent over 12 billion naira every year on fuel subsidy servicing, and said that no economy can develop that way. According to him, as cited in Sobowale (2023):

> Fuel subsidy payments were being funneled into the deep pockets and lavish bank accounts of selected group of individuals. This group had amassed so much wealth and power that they become a serious threat to the fairness of our economy and the integrity of our democratic governance. Nigeria could never become the society it was intended to be as long as such small powerful yet unelected group holds enormous influence over our political economy and the institution that govern it.

Some fuel subsidy removal protagonists argue that fuel subsidy removal was not a bad economic move, but that government would have put some remedial measures that would have ameliorated the sufferings of the masses. International organizations, especially the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), have hailed the fuel subsidy removal; they said that the removal will retool and kick-start economic transformation and growth. As plausible as their accolades might sound, fuel subsidy is the only welfare package Nigerian citizens are enjoying from their government. Even in the Western economies that allow the forces of demand and supply to hold sway, there are some measures of subsidy that give their citizens some respite and latitude to operate, especially in the area of agriculture. There is no economy that operates wholly an open or closed system; what obtains is mostly mixed economy.

Policy Execution and Insensitivity

As a primary function of the state, section 14(2) of the 1999 constitution as amended stipulates that the Nigerian government is to provide for the security and economic wellbeing of its citizens as one of the fulcrums of its legitimacy. Thus, security and economic wellbeing are interwoven and interrelated as one leads to the other. In recent times, security needs of the citizens embrace social, cultural, political and economic needs. This is because no nation that needs peace and development would pay lip-service to the basic needs of its citizenry as such neglect may lead to untold suffering and anarchy.

Although the removal of fuel subsidy had foot-dragged over the years, by 2023 government was still unable to come up with sustainable palliative measures before the sudden removal. This sort of insensitive approach has characterized government policies in Nigeria since independence. And this

has led to a high degree of developmental distortions that crystallize as poverty and suffering among the masses. Rather than weighing the pros and cons of government plans before announcing them, policymakers in Nigeria use suffering and hardship to test the pulse of citizens' acceptance or rejection of public policies. The fuel subsidy removal is akin to the recent naira redesign in Nigeria where the CBN seemed not to know that the policy, especially the cash-limit aspect of it, would negatively affect the living standard of the people.

Findings and Discussion

As earlier mentioned, thirty (30) respondents from three geopolitical zones of Nigeria (namely, the South East, South South, and South West zones) were purposively interviewed. Respondents #1, #2, #6, #8, #9, #10, #25, #26, and #29 said that government's action was not well thought out as it came when the economy was recovering from recession and the naira redesign crisis. Respondents #3, #4. #5, #11, #12, #13, #14, #15, #16, #19, and #24 revealed that no time was more propitious than the 29th May, 2023 Bola Ahmed Tinubu declaration that fuel subsidy was gone. They said the monumental corruption associated with the fuel subsidy regime was paralyzing the economy and enriching only a few individuals. Respondents #17, #18, #21, #22, #23, #24, #27, #26, #28, and #30 saw fuel subsidy as a cankerworm that had eaten into the nations treasure but observed that measures should have been put in place to cushion the sufferings of the common masses.

Conclusion

The oil sector is a very critical sector, as it is Nigeria's main foreign-exchange earner as well as the sector that provides the petroleum products Nigeria uses domestically to power the vehicles engaged in the distribution of goods and services across the country. This study has observed and illustrated that an increase in fuel price would always have a multiplier effect that would shoot up the prices of goods and services in the country. It was also noted that to assuage the effect the increase in price of commodities might have on Nigerians, the price control Act (PCA) was enacted in 1977 as a way of controlling the forces of demand and supply. Although no government policy is expected to remain static, since the global economy is subject to change, a major change in government policy, such as fuel-subsidy removal in Nigeria, needs to be people-oriented; after all, the essence of governance is for the provision of socio-economic and security needs of citizens. Any government that is insensitive to the welfare of its citizens, especially in advanced democratic settings, is bound to lose re-election bid. But this is not often the case in many developing countries,

especially Nigeria, where a politician could occupy an elective office as a result of rigging and manipulation of the electoral process. This is why such leaders come up with anti-people policies. A combination of appropriate timing and manner of implementation is what makes a policy seem good or bad. Deregulating the price of PMS, thereby allowing only market forces to determine its price, may be a defendable economic decision, but government should have embarked on basic remedial measures to cushion the effect of the removal on the masses.

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

Christian Osemuyi Oseghale

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 existent, 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 petition 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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