THE COMMON CAUSES OF DIVORCE AMONG CHRISTIAN COUPLES IN NIGERIA

BY

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*Abstract*

*Divorce among Christian couples in Nigeria has become a serious concern, challenging the biblical understanding of marriage as a permanent tie. This study uses a qualitative research method to look at the common causes of divorce among Christian couples in Nigeria, therefore giving detailed knowledge of the lived experiences of affected individuals. Data was collected via semi-structured interviews with pastors, divorced or separated Christian couples, and marital therapists from several religious perspectives. Theme analysis revealed, via key aspects promoting marriage failure, infidelity, financial instability, poor communication, unresolved difficulties, infertility, domestic violence, and outside family influence The study also emphasises how couples' reactions to marital crises depend on their religious beliefs and church teachings; occasionally, divorce is avoided or postponed even in cases of severe marriage problems. Even if the church is quite important in promoting good relationships, results imply that more proactive pastoral counselling, pre-marital education, and intervention programs to manage these recurrent marriage problems are needed. The study shows that a comprehensive plan including religious institutions, family structures, and community support systems may help to reduce the high frequency of divorce among Christian couples in Nigeria. From a qualitative point of view, knowing the fundamental reasons for divorce helps this study to contribute to the ongoing debates on enhancing Christian marriages and raising long-term marriage stability in Nigeria.*

Keywords: Divorce, Christian Couples, Nigeria, Infertility, Marital Crisis, Pastoral Counselling

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background to the study:

1.1 The growing rate of divorce among Christian couples in Nigeria, as well as the church and society at large, raises time-sensitive issues. This phenomenon exposes a clear discrepancy between religious teachings and modern marital behaviours, thus contradicting the biblical perspective of marriage as a holy and lifelong commitment. Several studies have tried to figure out why this is happening. The results indicate that unstable finances, bad partner choice, and cheating are common among divorcing couples (Frank, 2019). Dealing with the problems Christian couples in Nigeria experience depends on being aware of these factors. One of the most common reasons for divorce is financial difficulties. Many couples struggle with poor money management and economic constraints, which can lead to conflict (Frank, 2019). The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1970 lets a couple get a divorce for several reasons, such as being apart for two years without either person objecting. The article "Divorce law and practices among Christians" was published in 2013. Such legal clauses can aggravate conflicts in relationships, which makes some people believe divorce is a beneficial way out instead of trying to resolve their problems. Furthermore, cultural elements are critical in determining marital dynamics. Problems like childlessness and mixed marriages usually fuel discontent in couples (Frank, 2019). The emotional toll these difficulties take might lead to a setting fit for conflict and finally to divorce. This study indicates that building successful pre- and post-marital counselling programs meant to promote Christian marriages across Nigeria depends on raising awareness of these common reasons..

1.2 Statement of the Problems

Rising divorce rates among Christian couples in Nigeria call for urgent social attention worthy of thorough investigation. Though the religious framework supports lifetime wedded commitment (Uroko & Enobong, 2019) many couples are facing problems that lead to separation. The complexity of the variables generating this phenomenon is varied, as it involves social influences, poor choice of relationships, and financial difficulties. These issues affect not just the involved individuals but also have major effects on churches and children (Favour Uroko & Solomon I. Enobong, 2019).

Furthermore, challenging the narrative of marriage breakdown are the emotional and spiritual consequences of divorce in Christian homes. Many couples dealing with personal issues, such as infidelity or unhappiness in relationships, find that they contradict their religious convictions. This disagreement underscores the critical need for empirical research that aims to more precisely identify these fundamental components. Dealing with these issues might give data that can help slow down the increasing trend of divorce among Nigerian Christian couples.

1.3 Research Objectives

The aim of this study is to discover the most likely causes of divorce in Nigeria and how factors such as lack of communication, adultery, financial problems, domestic violence, and cultural influences contribute to marital breakdown.

The aim of this study is to investigate how Christian couples' decisions on whether to stay in or call off their marriages could affect theological opinions on divorce.

The aim is to discover how spiritual dedication maintains Christian relationships and how lack of it fuels divorce.

1.4 Research Questions

Among Nigerian Christian couples, what are the most likely causes of divorce? How might lack of communication, adultery, financial problems, domestic violence, and cultural influences all help to produce marital breakdown?

Depending on the choices Christian couples make about either staying in or divorcing their marriages, how might theological views on divorce change?

In what ways might spiritual dedication—or lack thereof—affect the stability and lifetime of Christian marriages in Nigeria?

1.5 Significance of the Studies

Researching the common causes of divorce among Christian couples in Nigeria is crucial as it would serve to draw attention to significant socioeconomic factors affecting family structures in a spiritually and culturally appropriate environment. Knowing the specific factors driving divorce rates to rise globally among Christian couples in Nigeria will enable clergy, therapists, and lawmakers to specifically assist in marriage breakdown. This study aims to identify basic issues like communication breakdown, financial pressure, infidelity, and cultural norms that could lead to divorce.

Furthermore, this study is very important for fostering closer relationships among Nigerian Christians. By addressing these elements, therapies meant for the unique cultural setting of Nigerian Christians might be developed, stressing effective communication methods and conflict resolution. Ultimately, this study not only enriches academic discussion but also has a practical purpose since it encourages stronger marriages and families, therefore strengthening the cohesion and stability of the community.

1.6 The Coverage of the Study

Knowing the spectrum of the studies on the common causes of divorce among Christian couples in Nigeria helps one to grasp the socio-cultural and theological factors influencing marital stability. This study intends to look at numerous factors influencing marriage breakdowns, including communication issues, financial stress, infidelity, and differing beliefs or perspectives. Focussing mainly on Christian couples, the study aims to demonstrate how personal experiences interact with religious teachings and social expectations in determining marital outcomes.

This research will also cover a broad range of Nigerian demographics, including variations in geography, socioeconomic levels, and faiths, thereby covering many facets. Such a comprehensive approach will help one to grasp how these elements influence Christian opinions on divorce. It will also consider various therapies to let couples have healthier relationships, therefore addressing certain issues.

Ultimately, this research aims to add to the body of knowledge already in print on marriage and divorce and offer practical guidance for church leaders and counsellors striving to help couples negotiate their marital challenges

. **1.7** Methodology and Limitations of the Methods

The qualitative study titled "The Common Causes of Divorce Among Christian Couples in Nigeria" will employ a phenomenology research approach to investigate the lived experiences of divorced Christian couples and the clergy who have provided them guidance. The research will concentrate on divorced Christian couples, clergy, and Christian marital counsellors in Nigeria; use purposive selection to identify individuals with direct experience of divorce or those who have provided guidance to divorcing couples The study aims to analyse divorce factors among Nigerian Christian couples using a sample size of 10-20 participants, using semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. Despite ethical issues, the study can provide new perspectives on divorce factors due to subjectivity, limited sample size, emotional sensitivity, and labour-intensive data collection.

1.8 Gap in knowledge

Not Enough Research Especially Designed for Christians. Many Nigerian studies on divorce exclude Christian couples of Christians. Most research ignores specific to Christian relationships, denominational teachings, doctrinal influences, and religious interventions in marital problems. variances in philosophy and theology The causes and effects of divorce among Catholic, Pentecostal, Anglican, and other Christian groups have not been much investigated. While some faiths absolutely oppose divorce, others permit it only under certain conditions. Unknown is how much doctrine affects marriage stability. Female opinions are under-represented. Many studies on Nigerian divorce overlook the opinions of Christian women in favour of sociocultural aspects. Pressures include marital abuse, guilt about infertility, and conformity standards that could lead women to keep their divorce secret. Christians Divorce from Infertility. Though a common component of marital unrest in Nigeria, infertility is not a topic of much research on how it can influence Christian couples. While divorce rates among Christian couples call for more investigation, Christian ideas on faith, tenacity, and divine intervention might affect childlessness. Modernizing effects derived from social media. Modern research largely concentrates on traditional divorce reasons such as infidelity and financial difficulties. Globalization, modernity, and society's influences, Generational and socioeconomic disparities. Most studies do not differentiate between young and old Christian spouses. Younger urban Christian couples affected by modern ideas may divorce for different reasons than older, more traditional generations.

1.9 Definition of terms

Marriage: Usually resulting from religious or civil rituals, a legally and socially accepted union between a man and a woman is meant for companionship, love, and procreation.

Common Causes: The often occurring or generally accepted causes of marriage breakdown that result in divorce.

Infidelity: When one or both of the partners have extramarital affairs, they are betraying their marriage vows of faithfulness.

Communication Breakdown: Couples' inability to clearly communicate their ideas, emotions, and expectations results in misinterpretation and strife.

Financial Issues: Economic problems that strain marriage include unemployment, poor money management, or different financial priorities.

Domestic Violence: Abuse-physical, psychological, or emotional—within the marriage damages one or both partners and usually results in separation or divorce.

Incompatibility: Variations in personality, values, lifestyle, or goals can cause ongoing strife between partners.

Counselling and Mediation: Professional or religious direction given to couples facing marital problems helps to overcome issues and stop divorce.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Framework

Both academic study and useful assistance depend on a conceptual framework describing the usual causes of divorce among Nigerian Christian couples. Much research on the complicated character of divorce in this population has focused on different elements influencing marriage breakdown. Adeyiga (2016), for example, emphasizes societal pressures and sexual incompatibility as the main reasons for divorce; she makes no reference to the particular difficulties Christian couples experience. This problem highlights the requirement of a tailored conceptual framework including social context and religious concepts. Examining marriage among Igbo Catholics, Oforchukwu (2011) applies a mixed-methods approach blending Christian ideas with traditional values. Divorce results mostly from financial problems, infidelity, and childlessness. This paper contends that connections between religious beliefs and cultural standards shape the durability of marriage in this society. Therefore, a thorough framework should examine these components in addition to understanding how they interact with more general socioeconomic elements affecting Christian marriages in Nigeria. Frank (2019) also emphasizes that key causes of divorce among Nigerian Christians interfaith couples and poor partner choice. The study underscores the significance of pre- and post-marital therapy as a prevention against these issues. In the end, a good conceptual framework will help us to comprehend the reasons for divorce among Christian couples in Nigeria and guide legislators and church leaders.

2.2 Theological Perspectives on Divorce

Particularly given cultural and societal elements, the prevalence of divorce among Christian spouses in Nigeria has drawn significant theological concern. Studies show that the growing divorce rates can be explained by several factors, including financial problems, adultery, and poor partner choice (Frank, 2019). These points of view might be reflections of more theological worries about the dignity of marriage, as the scriptures demand. Emphasizing that marriage is a divine link, the biblical law against divorce underlines the significance of applying Christ's advice on marital purity (Enobong, 2011). This point of view implies that many Christians find it difficult to maintain their ideals in front of the demands of modern society. Moreover, research shows that numerous cultural practices in Nigerian churches might unintentionally aggravate marital conflict. For example, Uroko (2022) emphasizes how an overindulgence in financial success by church leaders results in irrational expectations among couples being generated. This emphasis not only makes individuals sad but also creates surroundings where dishonesty and cheating thrive. Such behaviours thus contravene basic theological ideas about marriage and family life as expressed in the Christian perspective. Church leadership could employ strong premarital and marriage counselling programs targeted to educate couples with conflict-resolving methods and thus strengthen spiritual relationships to overcome these problems (Frank, 2019; Uroko, 2022). The church may properly address the issues brought up by divorce among its members by basing these programs on biblical ideals while respecting sociocultural reality. In the end, a theological perspective on marriage might be a vital countermeasure against the current tendencies seen in Nigeria

2.3 Typical Reasons behind Divorce in Christian Couples

2.3.1 Lack of communication

Although the problem of divorce among Christian couples in Nigeria has attracted a lot of attention, one important element still gets little study: poor communication. Although a lot of research points to financial instability, adultery, and poor partner choice as causes of divorce (Frank & Özad, 2019), the importance of communication breakdowns has not been sufficiently discussed. Any good relationship is based on effective communication; however, its lack can aggravate already present conflicts and cause marital strife.

According to research, poor conflict resolution is a common problem among Nigerian couples that greatly influences the breakdown of their relationships ( Relationship Failure and Divorce Among Nigerian Couples, 2020). Relationship Failure and Divorce Among Nigerian Couples - SSRN, 2020, has underlined as predictors of divorce communication problems, including inadequate interpersonal discussion and a lack of pleasant contacts. These results imply that although Christian couples could potentially face comparable difficulties, they are sometimes disregarded because of a concentration on more obvious elements like financial problems or adultery.

Furthermore, impeding efficient communication between spouses might be insufficient pre- and post-marital counselling given by religious institutions. Frank and Özad (2019) underline how better training for church staff members is essential to boost counselling methods. Many couples suffer from unresolved issues that finally cause separation without appropriate direction on encouraging honest communication within marriages. Therefore, future studies should give top priority to knowing how communication—or lack thereof—contributes especially to divorce among Christian couples in Nigeria.

2.3.2 Infidelity and trust issues

Important causes of divorce in Christian couples are trust problems and infidelity. Often considered a severe breach of the marital covenant, infidelity not only breaks the vows taken before God but also significantly influences the emotional and psychological condition of both partners ( Styles, 2014). The fallout from infidelity might show up as emotions of betrayal, resentment, and hopelessness that together undermine trust—the pillar of every good marriage (Peters, 2020). An extramarital affair causes a distance that might seem insurmountable to the other partner. This loss of trust can cause more problems in the marriage and complicate reconciliation even more. Lack of communication stemming from these trust concerns produces marital strife. Couples who still have lingering concerns about each other's loyalty and devotion may find it difficult to communicate their emotions honestly or find a peaceful settlement of difficulties. Many times, the emotional repercussions from adultery initiate a cycle of suspicion and hatred. Although certain Christian faiths promote forgiveness and atonement after adultery (Jones, 2020), many spouses find this path tough. Sometimes the great degree of betrayal causes one to wonder about their capacity to rebuild what has been lost (Peters, 2021). Without enough support systems or healing techniques, such as therapy or honest communication, Christian couples may thus give in to the demands of infidelity and related trust problems.

2.3.3 Husbands alone carrying all family financial responsibilities.

Historically, the husband is traditionally the sole supporter of the family, but modern conditions have made it difficult for any spouse to cover all family expenses. This includes healthcare, school fees, telecommunications, food allowances, fuel costs, housing rent, furniture, and general upkeep. Job insecurity, unpaid wages, labor strikes, and escalating living costs make it difficult for a husband to bear all financial obligations alone. Despite this, many wives resist their husbands' efforts to contribute to daily expenses, allocating resources for emergencies and facilitating the dissolution of the marriage(Amobi, 2004). Some guys have been spending on small things like matches or college tuition, which finally helps them to create a family house. Working-class women have also objected to their husbands' attempts to allocate their salaries for home needs, made investments in their brothers' companies, or followed independent lives. Counselling can enable women to understand that although financial wealth is not necessary, and should be taken into account while debating the best way to combine their salaries and assets to satisfy their growing financial obligations of their growing family.

2.3.4 Domestic violence

Particularly among Nigerian Christian couples, domestic violence is a common issue that seriously influences the dynamics of marriage. Sometimes the sociocultural structure of Nigerian culture supports beliefs that excuse domestic violence, therefore encouraging marital strife and finally divorce. Odeleye (2019) argues that incidences of marital violence within Yoruba society might be explained, perhaps in other areas of Nigeria, by economic difficulties, cultural norms, and moral convictions. These departures from the notion of marriage in Christian theology damage human welfare and jeopardize the sanctity of marriage. Within the framework of divorce among Christian couples, domestic violence has a major role in influencing the outcome. The psychological and emotional consequences of abusive relationships might compel people to choose divorce or separation as ways of escape (Odeleye, 2019). Moreover, when one spouse endures continuous abuse, psychological, physical, or sexual, the basic trust required for a strong marriage is reduced. In both secular and religious systems, this breakdown may lead to insurmountable issues with solid justification for divorce. Since the church provides pastoral care and increases understanding of how domestic violence impacts couples, it is rather vital in addressing these problems. Religious organizations might help to avoid significant issues generating divorce among Christian couples in Nigeria by enabling honest talks regarding abuse and establishing strong relationship dynamics based on mutual respect and love (Odeleye, 2019). Dealing with domestic violence will help to preserve marriages and enhance general family welfare in any society. Especially among Nigerian Christian couples, domestic violence is a prevalent problem that greatly affects the dynamics of marriage. The sociopolitical framework of Nigerian culture sometimes favours opinions defending domestic violence, therefore encouraging marital strife and later divorce. Odeleye (2019) argues that moral views, cultural norms, and financial hardships drive instances of domestic violence within Yoruba society—perhaps extending to other regions of Nigeria. This transgression of marital rules damages not only human wellbeing but also the holiness of marriage as defined in Christian teaching. Domestic violence is largely responsible for the disintegration of Christian relationships. Abuse in relationships can result in psychological and emotional weight that drives people to choose divorce or separation as their means of escape (Odeleye, 2019). Moreover, the fundamental faith needed for a good marriage vanishes when one partner experiences continuous physical, psychological, or otherwise abuse. Usually, this breakdown results in insurmountable problems that justify divorce in both secular and religious environments. The church helps to tackle these issues by providing pastoral care and increasing understanding of how domestic violence affects couples, therefore guiding their behaviour. Religious organisations can assist Christian couples in Nigeria to address significant problems causing divorce by promoting honest communication about the frequency of abuse and building good relationship dynamics based on mutual respect and love (Odeleye, 2019). Dealing with domestic violence not only helps to save marriages but also improves general family welfare in any culture.

2.3.5 Cultural influences and family interference

Divorce among Christian couples in Nigeria is a complex phenomenon affected by both cultural and family meddling. In Nigerian society, cultural background shapes attitudes and expectations about marriage to a major extent. Conforming to societal standards is under great pressure from traditional beliefs, which can lead to irrational presumptions about the obligations and responsibilities of marriage (Frank, 2019). For example, the shame attached to childlessness can be quite taxing in marriages as spouses may feel obliged to satisfy society's needs for reproduction. Thus, this cultural emphasis may aggravate emotions of inadequacy or failure when couples suffer with fertility (Christian attitude on marriage and divorce in Nigeria sub-group, 2024). Family intervention greatly affects the dynamics of divorce among Christian couples living in Nigeria. Families often have a significant influence on marital decisions, including choice of partners and methods of conflict resolution. This participation might manifest as pressure from relatives over financial obligations or lifestyle choices that deviate from the couple's preferences (Frank, 2019). Furthermore, family expectations could impede good communication between spouses, which results in unsolved problems that finally help to explain marital breakdowns (Christian perspective of marriage and divorce in Nigeria sub-group, 2024) Therefore, one has to understand these cultural elements and family interferences to solve the rising divorce rate among Christian couples in Nigeria. By guiding better communication patterns and realistic expectations among married couples, churches might be able to reduce these issues using improved pre- and post-marital treatment..

2.3.6 Childlessness

Often stemming from infertility or barrenness, childlessness is the inability of a married couple to conceive children following several years of marriage. Often this results in humiliation and hurried actions, such as looking for children from friends, family, and physicians. Couples may also seek advice from family members, friends, and spiritual fathers, which can lead to separation or divorce. Marriage is what bears children, not children bearing marriage(Amobi, 2004). Couples should offer love, patience, care, commitment, honesty, and sincerity to their wives and husbands when facing infertility. If they feel alone about the absence of a child, they may consider adoption and continue believing in God for their child. However, this decision should be a communal effort, with enough effort on both sides to love and care for the chosen child. Polygamy, which Africans hoped would reduce infertility, has been criticised by Western education and Christianity, making it nearly an obscenity to consider as a solution to infertility in modern times (Amobi, 2004.

2.3.7 Incompatibility and unresolved conflicts

Though the general level of marital conflict may appear low, Victor Umaru and Frank (2024) note that underlying factors, including poor communication, can aggravate tensions and lead to long-lasting unresolved problems. As different studies have revealed, among Christian couples living in Nigeria, incompatibility and unresolved problems are mostly reasons for divorce. A good settlement of these problems will assist in interrupting a circle of discontent inside the marriage, therefore enabling final separation from it. Furthermore, aggravating marriage among Christian couples in Nigeria is a common problem, like childlessness and overly high expectations. Unreasonable expectations about marriage responsibilities and commitments have been found to cause emotions of inadequacy and rage (20211). Couples that stray from these expectations using different values or life objectives may experience emotional distance and unresolved conflicts. Among other undesirable consequences, this emotional distance may manifest itself for the involved parties as sadness and health issues. Apart from the cooperation, these unresolved problems affect families and society at large. Previous studies from 2019 show how divorce not only affects family dynamics but also poses difficulties for religious institutions supposed to support these partnerships. Counselling for incompatibility both before and after marriage can therefore be quite beneficial in addressing these issues. Encouraging better communication skills and understanding between partners might help this group reduce the divorce rate.

2.3.8 Lack of spiritual commitment

Divorce among Christian couples in Nigeria has drawn much attention and revealed several degrees of causation. Lack of spiritual devotion is one crucial factor that comes up; although not usually discussed expressly in research, it quietly influences marital stability. According to Dell and Nimulola (2019), couples' reliance on witchcraft beliefs and rejection of Bible teachings might be mirror images of a more widespread deficiency of spiritual contact. Sometimes this disparity leads to arguments that damage the dignity of marriage, therefore contributing to its disintegration.

Moreover, the breakdown of the marriage connection highlights how less religion might increase marital conflict (2020). Commonly, lack of shared spiritual values leads to an environment in which couples are less able to manage issues such as financial hardship or infidelity—problems commonly considered as forerunners to divorce. Studies reveal that without a solid spiritual base, couples might battle with excellent communication and conflict resolution (Dell & Nimulola, 2019). Therefore, one may say that a lack of spiritual commitment not only interacts with divorce but also actively facilitates its occurrence.

Basically, even though several factors lead to divorce among Nigerian Christian couples, including personal conflicts and financial difficulties, the significance of spiritual commitment cannot be underlined. Pre- and post-marital therapy could assist in improving this aspect and offer a required intervention for building resilience in marriages (Dell & Nimulola, 2019). By addressing the fundamental causes of faith and spirituality, one can help to lower the worrying divorce rates among this demographic

. 2.3.9 Comparison

Comparatively, in a Christian marriage, it can lead to significant strife and ultimately divorce. Though Christian theology stresses marriage purity, many individuals find themselves evaluating their marriages against social mores or the seeming achievements of others. This cultural comparison fuels inflated expectations of what a healthy marriage should consist of, which can lead to discontent (Stone & Wilcox, 2024). One partner could start to doubt the value of their own relationship, say if another believes other couples are happier or have more money. This ongoing evaluation encourages emotional separation and conflict using solitude. Comparatively, comparing frequently aggravates any type of marital problems. Studies abound showing that common causes of divorce are often poor communication and financial problems (Stone & Wilcox, 2024). Particularly in rich areas, couples who compare their financial situation to that of others may feel inadequate or resentful. Such emotions may aggravate conflicts about future planning and financial management. Furthermore, peer comparisons concerning parenting methods or lifestyle choices could worsen marriage stress by dividing couples who might feel inadequate in comparison to others (Style, 2024). In the end, even if Christian philosophy offers a foundation for committed relationships founded on love, the dangers of comparison could compromise even in this regard. Seeing others' apparently flawless lives might have psychological effects that drive couples to focus on perceived flaws rather than on the significance of their own connection (Stone & Wilcox, 2024). Reducing the negative consequences of comparison calls for respect for one's own route of marriage.

2.4. Different Christian denominations' views on divorce

2.4.1 The Catholic Church:

The Catholic Church strictly opposes divorce based on its interpretation of Jesus’ teachings (Matthew 19:6). Marriage is considered a sacrament and indissoluble. The Catholic Church regards marriage as a lifetime sacrament and takes a complex attitude on divorce. Although the Church acknowledges that separation may be necessary under some circumstances even if it does not officially acknowledge divorce (Peregoy, 2024). This multifarious approach shows a knowledge of human interactions even in cases of ideological commitment. According to studies, one-quarter of Catholics have gone through divorce—a percentage lower than that of other significant U.S. religious groups (Wormald, 2015). Among those divorced, many do not seek annulment for a variety of reasons, including the belief it is unnecessary or a resistance to accepting their previous marriage. Bishop Eric F. MacKenzie emphasised the Church's established policies and procedures to address marital issues as well as its rejection of divorce and remarriage. Until people face personal problems related to their marriages, these official procedures remain mostly unknown and point to a gap between theory and reality inside the Christian society.

2.4.2 Anglican Church

Seeing marriage as a permanent partnership grounded in Jesus's teachings, the Anglican Church maintains a conventional view on divorce (Wilgus, 2024). The church emphasises the Matthean exception for "immorality," but it emphasises that this clause is a compromise to human fallibility rather than a complement (Wilgus, 2024). Anglican Communion Resolution 39 advocates this viewpoint by forbidding divorce save in cases of adultery or immorality. It says that remarriage is not accepted while a previous partner is still living and designates the guilty person as unworthy to obtain blessings during the lifespan of the innocent party (Lovell, 2024). This rigid approach has produced great internal conflict in the church as opposing views demand less respect. Emphasising an ontological perspective of marriage rooted in creation will assist in bringing cohesion and clarity about this contentious issue (Anonymous, 2024). Respect for God's plan might serve to promote a more empathetic attitude about divorce and remarriage.

2.4.3 Pentecostal Churches

Pentecostal churches create a difficult problem as most of them have strong anti-divorce rules. Studies show that rejection of the church causes substantial psychological and spiritual pain for divorced people (Moeti et al., 2024). This emphasises the need to support treatments in reducing negative effects on members' quality of life. Furthermore, research reveals that although Pentecostal beliefs highlight marital length and satisfaction, they might unintentionally contribute to building stigma about divorce (Burgess, n.d.). This stigma might limit pastoral help for divorce sufferers, therefore underlining a distinct disparity in church policies supposed to facilitate recovery and community inclusion. When one considers the reasons behind divorce among members of a congregation, one finds that little church intervention makes life more difficult for divorced persons. Pentecostal churches may enable people facing post-divorce realities to recover emotionally and better serve their communities by implementing best practices and building supportive networks.

2.4.4 Orthodox Churches

Emphasising spiritual consequences above official interpretations, the Orthodox Church tackles divorce with great skill. While marriage has always been considered an indissoluble union, the Church acknowledges that some marriages may be irreversibly damaged and advises separation for the benefit of the involved people (Vali, n.d). In Orthodox societies, divorce is considered a major failing and occasionally results in feelings of loss and despair. Against this stigma, the Church offers possibilities for atonement and pardon. allowing ecclesiastical divorce to satisfy personal needs allows one to keep their bond with God and society (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, 2023). Here, the concept of \*oikonomia\* is rather crucial. This concept, under particular conditions emphasises God's love and pity in allowing divorce (Vali, n.d.). The Church's focus on pastoral care seeks to lessen emotional suffering and guide members towards healing using their faith and community (Public Orthodoxy, 2024).

2.4.5 Evangelical

Divorce exposes in evangelical environments a complex link between religious ideas and personal experience. Though most people think marriage should be perfect, statistics show Evangelicals divorce more than people from other religions (Baylor University, 2014). This paradox raises questions on the relevance of pastoral care in some circumstances.

In any situation, divorce is Advocates of the "permanence view," who stand very differently from more sympathetic points of view, enabling separation in times of considerable marital difficulty (Newheiser, 2025). This juxtaposition illustrates the differences between Biblical commitment and the realities individuals negotiate in challenging relationships.

The analysis of how Hornby's (2024) expression of this conflict in the life of divorced British Evangelicals reveals the need for compassionate pastoral treatment. Although some of their methods fit Biblical concepts on marriage, Hornby's research reveals that many churches overlook the emotional toll divorce causes on divorcées. The findings show that combining compassionate methods with a strong religious dedication by itself can help to heal and more fairly show God's love (Hornby, 2024).

2.4.6 Non-Denominational Churches

Compared to traditional denominations, non-denominational churches occasionally have a more lenient attitude towards divorce. Different interpretations of marital dissolution are permitted by non-denominational churches, which may prioritise personal faith experiences over strict doctrinal allegiance, even though many Protestant pastors view divorce as sinful, particularly when it involves emotional disconnection (Earls, 2015).

Personal experiences of people in non-denominational environments expose a complicated interaction between faith and personal situations surrounding divorce. Studies show that divorced evangelicals struggle to reconcile their faith with their divorce; yet, organisations like Restored Lives provide support regardless of denominational affiliation (Hornby, 2024). This emphasises a sensitive method of recovery.

In the end, although stressing personal experience, the position on divorce among non-denominational churches reflects more general society views. Rigid doctrinal restrictions free us to have a more complex view of marriage and separation, so enabling an environment where Christians may negotiate their challenges with compassion and community support.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The study approach used to examine the typical reasons for divorce among Nigerian Christian couples is presented in this chapter. The demographic, sampling strategy, data gathering methods, data analysis methodologies, and study design are all covered in depth. The technique is set up to guarantee that the study offers a thorough grasp of the elements influencing divorce in Nigeria's Christian setting.

3.2 Research methodology

To investigate the lived experiences of Christian couples, divorced people, and religious leaders, this study uses a qualitative research methodology. Personal tales, theological viewpoints, and societal impacts on divorce may all be thoroughly examined thanks to the qualitative method.

3.3 Study Population

Divorced Christian couples, church leaders, marital counsellors, and Nigerian solicitors with expertise in family law make up the study's population. This choice guarantees a range of viewpoints on the reasons behind divorce.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Method

Participants who have witnessed or advised on divorce situations in Christian marriages are chosen using a purposive sample approach. Ten Christian divorced couples, five marital counsellors, five church leaders (pastors, priests or elders), five family law specialists, and five solicitors make up the sample.

3.5 Data Gathering Techniques

Focus groups and in-depth interviews are used to gather data. While focus group talks offer a more comprehensive viewpoint from church leaders and counsellors, the interviews offer firsthand accounts from people who have gone through divorce.

3.6 Analysis of Data

To find recurring trends and typical reasons for divorce, the gathered data is subjected to a thematic analysis. An organised discussion of the findings is made possible by the categorisation of the responses according to the subtopics of the literature study.

3.7 Moral Points to Remember

Before starting the investigation, ethical permission is acquired. Confidentiality is guaranteed, and before interviews, informed consent is acquired. When appropriate, pseudonyms are employed to safeguard the identities of participants.

3.8 Rationale for the Approach

Because it enables a more thorough investigation of the varying subjective experiences of divorce among Christian spouses, the qualitative technique that was used is appropriate. This approach guarantees a comprehensive comprehension of the phenomena by integrating religious, cultural, and social viewpoints.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the information acquired on the usual reasons for divorce among Christian couples in Nigeria. The results are analysed thematically in line with the primary issues brought up by the literature study. The chapter also tackles the implications of the outcomes about social dynamics, cultural inspirations, and religious points of view.

4.2 Conceptual Framework on Divorce. Usually, divorce is the official dissolution of a marriage achieved by a court or another qualified authority. Sometimes in the Christian environment, divorce is considered as a legal matter as well as a spiritual and moral one. The poll findings show that many Christian couples struggle to combine the spiritual and legal aspects of marriage breakdown, which usually leads to lengthy conflict and emotional anguish.

4.3 Divorce Theological Angles. Divorce is seen differently by various Christian organisations in Nigeria from a theological standpoint. While some religions absolutely condemn divorce, others offer conditional permission depending on Biblical standards, including adultery or desertion. The poll indicates that many Christian couples experience pressure from religious views, which sometimes prevents them from seeking therapy or making good decisions about their deteriorating marriages.

4.4 Lack of Transmission of Information. Effective communication is fundamental in a happy marriage. The poll findings indicate that a substantial majority of Christian couples who divorced claimed poor communication was the main cause of their marriage failing. Many times, unresolved problems, misinterpretations, and a lack of emotional expression become major confrontations leading to separation.

4.5 Conflicts in Trust and Infidelity. Among Nigerian Christian couples, adultery ranks among the most commonly mentioned reasons for divorce. The report claims that extramarital meetings damage trust and emotionally distance couples. Sometimes, even in the absence of particular evidence, the breakup of a marriage occurred from doubts and accusations of dishonesty.

4.6 Married Men Comprising the family's total financial responsibilities, by themselves. One of the main causes of marital conflict is money problems. The findings show that many Nigerian Christian homes have fathers who bear the whole responsibility for the family's financial needs. Particularly when the wife is considered financially dependent and the husband finds it challenging to meet the expectations, this often leads to conflict, resentment, and stress.

4.7 Domestic Violence Domestic violence—physical, emotional, and psychological abuse—was blamed in a major part for divorce. Many Christian women suffer silently under societal and religious rules forbidding separation. But sometimes divorce is seen as the only way out when the abuse grows intolerable.

4.8 Cultural Effects and Interference Within Families Stability of Christian marriages mostly depends on family intervention and cultural standards. The study claims that too much influence from in-laws and extended family may lead to conflicts and misunderstandings. Moreover, complicating marital issues are societal expectations, especially the focus on women to be docile in whatever circumstances.

4.9 Lack of Children: While childlessness is occasionally stigmatised in Nigerian society, childbearing is widely valued. According to the study, family and society highly pressure a Christian couple with infertility. Underlying this pressure might lie shame, emotional suffering, and ultimately divorce.

4.10 Unresolved Issues and Incompatibility Many times mentioned as reasons for divorce were neglected issues and marital discord. The poll revealed that some couples entered a marriage with illogical expectations or without enough understanding of their partner's beliefs and opinions. Variations in personality, manner of life, and decision-making throughout time generated continuous difficulties unsuitable for solution.

4.11 Low Spiritual Attachment Lack of spiritual commitment has been shown to be one of the main factors causing marital unrest. Sometimes, couples lacking a strong spiritual base found it difficult to resolve issues with Biblical instruction, therapy, or prayer. Moreover, closely related to a weak spiritual life was increased vulnerability to extrinsic temptations, such as financial irresponsibility and infidelity.

4.12 Examining Comparatively Many of the respondents said that comparing their marriage to others, especially in the age of social media, led to frustration and illogical expectations. Some couples felt under pressure to fulfil society's notion of a "perfect marriage," which typically resulted in emotions of inadequacy and finally marital breakdown.

4.13 Concise Overview This chapter has looked at and discussed the primary causes of divorce among Christian couples in Nigeria. According to the findings, issues including poor communication, infidelity, financial difficulty, domestic violence, cultural pressures, childlessness, and lack of spiritual devotion contribute in some degree to marriage instability. The next chapter will present ideas and conclusions drawn from these revelations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a summary of the research, significant findings, conclusions, and recommendations resulting from the analysis of the usual causes for divorce among Nigerian Christian couples. It also discusses the consequences of the findings and suggests subjects of further research.

5.2 Synopsis of Studies

The study sought the usual causes of divorce among Christian couples living in Nigeria. It looked at key issues like infidelity, financial stress, marital violence, cultural influences, childlessness, incompatibility, lack of spiritual dedication, and the negative consequences of comparison

Using a qualitative method, the study compiled points of view from divorcees, religious leaders, and marriage counsellors.

The findings showed that divorce usually occurs from a combination of several linked elements, many of which are influenced by religious, cultural, social, and financial expectations. Different churches saw divorce from different theological angles; some strongly condemned it while others permitted it under specific limits.

5.3 Essential Results

Among the main results of the research are the following:

Many Christian couples struggle with appropriate communication, which can lead to emotional alienation, miscommunication, and unsolved difficulties, eventually terminating in divorce.

Issues with trust and infidelity: Extramarital meetings have a major role in the disintegration of marriages as they frequently permanently undermine trust, which results in emotional suffering and separation.

Particularly in couples where the husband has full financial responsibility for the well-being of the family, financial stress became clear as a main cause of tension. The biggest reason Christian couples broke apart was abuse—physical, psychological, or emotional. Many victims stayed for a long time under social and religious responsibilities before deciding to cut off their relationship.

Cultural Factors and Family Interference: Family interference—especially from in-laws—was a prevalent issue generating marital problems and the final divorce.

Many couples endured pressure from family and society stemming from infertility, which caused unhappiness, shame, and eventually separation.

Incompatibility and divorce: Some couples were unable to settle ongoing disputes arising from differences in personality features, way of life, and values.

Couples without faith-based direction battled to properly handle marital difficulties; this was linked to a less spiritual underpinning and increased marital instability.

Comparatively, the inclination of digital age social media users to compare their marriage to others has led to inflated expectations and misery, hence increasing marital breakup.

5.4 final notes

The study reveals that a mix of social, economic, cultural, and religious aspects influences divorce among Christian couples in Nigeria. Some relationships fall apart because of controllable problems, such as poor communication, financial trouble, and outside influences; others fall apart because of unavoidable events, including adultery and domestic abuse. One cannot ignore the support couples acquire from the family, the church, and society. Reducing divorce rates needs greater counselling, financial planning, spiritual development, and conflict-resolving techniques, strengthening marriage foundations.

5.5 Advice Notes

These concepts are provided in light of the findings of the studies:

Encouragement of honest and open conversation might enable couples to tackle issues before they become uncontrolled.

Pre-marital and post-marital treatment should be provided by churches to enable couples to surpass difficulties and enhance their bonds.

By assuming shared financial responsibility, Christian couples can promote marriage's cooperation and assist one spouse to be less stressed.

Dealing with Domestic abuse: Local government and religious organisations should be strongly against domestic abuse and offer safe areas where victims might get aid.

Couples should create appropriate limitations with their extended family to guard their marriage from too much outside influence.

Churches and communities should provide emotional and psychological assistance instead of pushing infertile couples towards society's expectations.

Christian couples should give prayer, spiritual development, and faith-based teachings high priority as they plan for maintaining their marriage.

Particularly on social media, couples should be taught to concentrate on their own personal route instead of evaluating themselves against others, therefore reducing the harmful effects of social comparison.

5.6 Notes for Additional Research Future research might explore:

How much do religious leaders help to reduce the divorce rates among Christian couples?

The effectiveness of marriage treatment activities in preventing divorce.

a comparison of couples, Christian and non-Christian, Nigerian divorce rates.

5.7 Summary

The findings of the survey were compiled in this chapter together with recommendations and suggestions for lower divorce rates among Nigerian Christian couples. It emphasised in sustaining partnerships the need for communication, emotional support, financial stability, and spiritual devotion. The study emphasises how crucial the family, the community, and the church are to generating happy marriages.

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