

**Full Length Research**

# **Divorce and Its Negative Impacts on Children**

**Yahya Muhammed Bah**

University of The Gambia, School of Arts and Sciences, Brikama Campus, The Gambia, West Africa  
\*Corresponding author: yahyamammed@yahoo.co.uk

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In spite of the fact the current rate of divorce in The Gambia is not well documented, divorce and its associated problems especially on the children is a great concern not only to the government and its development partners but to the communities as well. The purpose of this study was to investigate the causes of divorce and its negatives impacts on the children of the divorcees. In nature, it was a descriptive survey and purposive sampling technique was used to select the respondents. The survey concentrated on six core areas: level of knowledge of divorce, Level of understanding of divorce, Level of knowledge of the causes of divorce, Level of knowledge of the negative impacts of divorce on the children, Level of knowledge of the support services needed by children of divorcees; and Level of knowledge of the preventive methods of divorce. Due to limited financial resources and time, the study took approximately one year three months. Well-structured questionnaires were used to collect the data from the participants in four markets. The data was presented and analyzed using tables and percentage. The findings revealed high level of awareness of divorce in the community though no consensus on its causes. It negatively affects all aspects of children developmental needs despite few positive impacts. Government should not only be the principle service provider but the core protector of this vulnerable.

**Keywords:** Divorce, children of divorcees, divorcees, negative impacts

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In The Gambia, the current rate of marital conflict, separation, divorce and re-marriage is yet to be scientifically documented. However, many marriages are struggling to survive and others dissolved simply because of people inability to completely prevent, eliminate or minimize marital disputes between married parties, families or even communities.

Therefore, many families are experiencing difficulties due to divorce or marital disputes. In light of this, the consequences of these unpleasant situations on the children, divorcees, married parties, families and communities can be harmful. This has motivated the conduct of this study.

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study was to have an in-depth understanding of the different causes of divorce, its impacts on the couples, children, and community; and how the negative effects can be minimized if not completely eliminated.

## **Research questions**

The study was guided by the following questions:

1. What are the main causes of divorce in The Gambia?
2. What are the negative impacts on the divorcees, children and community?
3. What are the professional services needed to support victims of divorce?

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Area of Study**

The study was conducted in four markets namely, Latrikunda Sabiji, Yundum, Brikama; and Talinding. These markets are not only one of the rapid growing markets in the semi-urban areas but are located in one of the most densely populated communities with all tribes and religious groups in the country including non-Gambians. Therefore, they were suitable to map the views of the most ethnic and religious groups.

### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

The design used for the study was a simply descriptive survey. The sample population consisted of married and divorced couples in the studied community. A sample size of fifteen married men and fifteen married women, and ten divorced couples making up a total of thirty five participants were recruited using purposive random sampling technique.

### **Data collection method**

The data was collected by conducting individual interviews using a structured questionnaire with fifteen married men, fifteen married women and ten divorced couples making up a total of thirty five participants. The questionnaire was divided into six sections namely, level of knowledge of divorce, Level of understanding of divorce, knowledge of the causes of divorce, knowledge of the negative impacts of divorce on the children, knowledge of the support services needed by children of divorced parents; and preventive methods of divorce.

### **Data Analysis method**

The data analysis process entailed two stages: the initial analysis was coding and tables creation, preparation of variables by combining a number of codes, converting codes into variables or developing completely new ones. This was used to provide a summary of patterns that emerged from the responses of the participants.

### **Limitations of the study**

The following were some of the challenges that posed great obstacles in the execution of the study:

**Literature:** though there have been many similar studies in this area but few were conducted in The Gambia. Therefore, it was a strong challenge to get the desire materials, especially for the literature review.

**Funding:** there was no financial support from any institution or individual despite all attempts. If there was some financial support the study would have been easier, less time consuming and above all the sample would have been bigger for generalization.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

### **Objectives of the study**

The objectives of the study are to identify the causes of divorce and its negative impacts on the children of the divorcees.

### Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to have an in-depth understanding of the causes of divorce and its negative consequences on the overall welfare of the children of divorced parents.

### Significance of the study

The importance of the study stemmed from the followings:

1. It will contribute to the body of existing knowledge in academia and other fields;
2. It will act as an input for policy makers, thus providing new insights to improve their ability to design effective policies and programmes to cater for the welfare of this vulnerable group;
3. It will provide a base for the protection and promotion of the rights of children of divorcees.
4. It will be useful to child rights and child protection advocates.
2. It will increase people knowledge of the risks to which such children are exposed.

### Definition of Concepts

**Child:** is any person under the age of 18.

**Divorce:** the legal dissolution of a marriage either by a court or other competent body or approved means.

**Divorcee:** A woman or a man who is divorced and has or has not been married again.

## DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSIONS

### Level of Understanding of Divorce

In reacting to whether the participants have ever heard of divorce, they all responded in the affirmative but reacted differently as to its meaning: termination of marriage 37(40%), termination of romantic relationship 22(23%), separation of man and woman 16(17%), separation of husband and wife 12(13%), others specify 5(4%). In a follow up question as to whether it is occurring in their community, vast majority 30(86%) responded in the affirmative. However, they differ in the most common types of divorce in the community as illustrated in table 1: uncontested divorce 42(33%), contested divorce 27(21%), all of the above 20(16%), revocable divorce 13(10%), arbitrated divorce 11(9%), others specify 7(6%), irrevocable divorce 5(4%), permanently irrevocable divorce 1(1%).

**Table 1.** Types of divorce common in the community

<b>Types of responses</b>	<b>No. of responses</b>	<b>% of responses</b>
Contested divorce	27	21.4
Uncontested divorce	42	33.3
Arbitrated divorce	11	8.7
Revocable divorce	13	10.3
Irrevocable divorce	5	3.9
Permanently irrevocable divorce	1	0.8
All of the above	20	15.8
Others specify	7	5.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Level of Knowledge of the Causes of Divorce

Commenting on the main causes of divorce in the community, participants opined variedly as captured in table 2 below: misunderstanding 37(16%), inadequate basic needs 25(11%), consumerism 22(10%), lack of communication 20(9%),

husband getting a second wife19(8%), financial hardship18(8%), in-laws and friends interferences15(7%), physical abuse11(5%), illness and disability and lack of respect 10(4%) respectively, mismatch 9(4%), years travel of one's spouse 8(4%), changes in physical appearances and sex outside marriage7(3%) respectively, wife getting a second husband4(2%); and others specify3(1%).

**Table 2.** main causes of divorce in the community

Types of responses	No. of responses	% of responses
Physical abuse	11	4.8
In-laws and friends interferences	15	6.6
Husband getting a second wife	19	8.4
Wife getting a second husband	4	1.7
Inadequate basic needs	25	11.1
Years travel of one's spouse	8	3.5
Lack of communication	20	8.8
Lack of respect	10	4.4
Sex outside marriage	7	3.1
Misunderstanding	37	16.4
Illness and disability	10	4.4
Consumerism	22	9.7
Financial hardship	18	8
Mismatch	9	4
Changes in physical appearances	7	3.1
Others specify	3	1.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>100</b>

Commenting on a notice of increased in divorce, majority23(66%) responded in the affirmative but significantly differed on the rationales as mapped out in table 3 underneath: lack of patient and respect in marriage31(15%), material consciousness28(13%), increased in unemployment21(10%), decreased in marriage value21(10%), increased in financial hardship17(8%), increased in moral decay and increased in the cost of living15(7%) respectively, easy access to sexual partners 13(6%), interference by in-laws11(5%), too much concentration on the internet10(%), less concern for children after divorce10(5%), interference by friends9(4%), gradual increased in divorce normalization8(4%); and others specify3(1%).

**Table 3.** Reasons for increased in divorce in the community in the last five years

Types of responses	No. of responses	% of responses
Increased in financial hardship	17	8.0
Increased in unemployment	21	9.9
Too much concentration on the internet	10	4.7
Material consciousness	28	13.2
Increased in moral decay	15	7.0
Interference by in-laws	11	5.1
Interference by friends	9	4.2
Increased in the cost of living	15	7.0
Lack of patient and respect in marriage	31	14.6
Decreased in marriage value	21	9.9
Easy access to sexual partners	13	6.1
Gradual increased in divorce normalization	8	3.7
Less concern for children after divorce	10	4.7
Others specify	3	1.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>100</b>

In a follow up question as to the types of marriages mostly at risk of divorce, respondents felt as indicated in table 4: forced and early marriages31(13%), internet marriages29(12%), polyandrous marriages28(12%), marriages in which wives earn more27(11%), marriage of business and rich spouses25(11%), marriage of highly educated spouses21(9%),

marriages in which husbands earn more14(6%), marriages of unemployed spouses13(6%), marriage of one educated spouse10(4%), polygamous marriages9(3%), marriages of poor spouses and marriage of one employed spouse7(3%) respectively, monogamous marriages6(2%), marriage of low educated spouses5(2%); and others specify3(1%).

**Table 4.** Marriages mostly at risk of divorce

Types of responses	No. of responses	% of responses
Forced and early marriages	31	13.1
Marriages of unemployed spouses	13	5.5
Marriage of one employed spouse	7	2.9
Marriage of one educated spouse	10	4.2
Marriage of low educated spouses	5	2.1
Marriage of highly educated spouses	21	8.9
Marriage of business and rich spouses	25	10.6
Marriages of poor spouses	7	2.9
Marriages in which wives earn more	27	11.4
Marriages in which husbands earn more	14	5.9
Internet marriages	29	12.3
Polygamous marriages	9	3.8
Monogamous marriages	6	2.5
Polyandrous marriages	28	11.9
Others specify	3	1.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>100</b>

Commenting on the relationship between divorcees in the community, participants felt differently: sometimes very poor49(31%), sometimes poor31(20%), always very good21(13%), sometimes good17(11%), sometimes excellent 13(8%), always bad11(7%), others specify7(4%), always poor5(3%), always excellent2(1%), and I don't know1(1%).

#### Level of Knowledge of the Negative Impacts of Divorce on the Children

While majority 26(74%) acknowledged divorce having negative impacts, they differ as to who is mostly affected when it occurs as portrayed in table 5 below: children of the divorcees47(38%), divorcees themselves34(27%), relatives of the divorcees11(9%), members of the extended family9(7%), mothers in-laws7(6%), fathers in-laws and community5(4%) respectively, elders in the family4(3%), and others specify3(3%).

**Table 5.** Persons mostly to be negatively affected when divorce occurred

Types of responses	No. of responses	% of responses
Divorcees themselves	34	27.2
Children of the divorcees	47	37.6
Mothers in-laws	7	5.6
Fathers in-laws	5	4.0
Relatives of the divorcees	11	8.8
Members of the extended family	9	7.2
Elders in the family	4	3.2
Community	5	4.0
Others specify	3	3.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	

In a follow-up as to which areas of the children's welfare are mostly affected, respondents opined: education42(24.4%), social life35(20.3%), emotions23(13.3%), health21(12.2%), self esteem19(11%), shelter12(6.9%), safety11(6.3%); and others specify9(5.2%). In a related question majority 18(51.2%) claimed children within the age bracket of (2 to 4) years are the most affected though disagreed on the types of negative impacts divorce has on the children as indicated in table 6 below: emotional37(16%), relationship with parents32(14%), social life and health25(11%) respectively, physical23(10%), educational20(8%), relationship with peers18(8%), behavioral15(6%), economical and relationship with grand parents13(5%) respectively, spiritual11(5%), safety9(4%); and others specify6(3%).

**Table 6.** Types of negative impacts divorce has on the children

Types of responses	No. of responses	% of responses
Emotional	37	15.6
Physical	23	9.7
Behavioral	15	6.3
Educational	20	8.4
Economical	13	5.4
Social life	25	10.5
Spiritual	11	4.6
Health	25	10.5
Safety	9	3.7
Relationship with parents	32	13.5
Relationship with grand parents	13	5.4
Relationship with peers	18	7.5
Others specify	6	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>237</b>	

In reacting on the types of negative emotional impacts divorce have on the children, participated responded as mapped out in table 7 underneath: feeling depress32(15%), feeling distress29(13%), feeling disappointed23(11%), decreased in self esteem21(10%), violence thoughts and feelings and getting annoyed easily18(8%) respectively, feeling lonely and insecure15(%), mood swings and irritability14(7%), frequent guilt feeling or embarrassment13(6%), withdrawal from family members11(5%), withdrawal from friends and acquaintances9(4%), anger towards oneself and others7(3%); and others specify5(2%).

**Table 7.** Types of negative emotional impacts of divorce on children

Types of responses	Responses	%
Mood swings and irritability	14	6.5
Frequent guilt feeling or embarrassment	13	6.0
Withdrawal from family members	11	5.1
Withdrawal from friends and acquaintances	9	4.1
Violence thoughts and feeling	18	8.3
Anger towards oneself and others	7	3.2
Decreased in self esteem	21	9.7
Feeling distress	29	13.4
Feeling depress	32	14.8
Feeling lonely and insecure	15	6.9
Feeling disappointed	23	10.6
Getting annoyed easily	18	8.3
Others specify	5	2.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>100</b>

In a similar question as to the negative educational impacts of divorce on the children, participants opined as illustrated in table 8 below: decreased in performance 35(12%), absent from school and decreased motivation to work hard in class 29(10%) respectively, difficulty in concentrating in class 27(9%), decreased educational aspiration 25(8%), decreased parent participation in home works 23(8%), becoming dropouts and decreased engagement in school activities 21(%) respectively, low educational attainment at adulthood 19(6%), changing school prematurely 17(6%), decreased chances of attending university 15(%), repeating a class and increase chances of expulsion 13(4%) respectively, increased chances of suspension 12(4%); and others specify 3(1%).

**Table 8.** Negative educational impacts of divorce on children

Types of responses	Responses	%
Absent from school	29	9.6
Changing school prematurely	17	5.6
Becoming dropouts	21	6.9
Decreased in performance	35	11.5
Low educational attainment at adulthood	19	6.2
Decreased educational aspiration	25	8.2
Repeating a class	13	4.3
Decreased chances of attending university	15	4.9
Decreased parent participation in home works	23	7.6
Decreased motivation to work hard in class	29	9.6
Decreased engagement in school activities	21	6.9
Increased chances of suspension	12	3.9
Difficulty in concentrating in class	27	8.9
Increase chances of expulsion	13	4.3
Others specify	3	0.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>100</b>

Lamenting on the negative behavioral impacts of divorce on children the participants opined variedly as shown in table 9 below: propensity for crime 34(11%), disobedience 33(11%), conduct disorder 31(11%), uncooperative behaviors 31(11%), becoming easily violent 25(9%), delinquency and decreased success in handling romantic relationship 23(8%) respectively, drug abuse 21(7%), no forethought behavior 18(6%), identity crisis 17(%), frequent involvement in risky behaviors 13(4%), decreased success in managing future responsibilities 10(3%); and others specify 4(1%).

**Table 9.** Negative behavioral impacts of divorce on children

Types of responses	Responses	%
Conduct disorder	31	10.6
Delinquency	23	7.8
No forethought behavior	18	6.1
Frequent involvement in risky behaviors	13	4.4
Drug abuse	21	7.1
Decreased success in managing future responsibilities	10	3.4
Decreased success in handling romantic relationship	23	7.8
Propensity for crime	34	11.6
Identity crisis	17	5.8
Habitual sleeplessness	9	3.0
Becoming easily violent	25	8.5
Uncooperative behaviors	31	10.6
Disobeyance	33	11.3
Others specify	4	1.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>100</b>

Similarly, respondents subscribed differently to the negative health impacts of divorce on children as illustrated in table 10 underneath: susceptibility to sickness 39(23%), weaken immune system 27(16%), high rates of sexually transmitted infections 22(13%), increased chances of getting infections 21(13%), bed wetting 17(10%), headache 11(7%), digestive problems 9(5%), stomachache 7(4%), increased chances of getting stroke and increased rate of mortality 4(2%) respectively, others specify 3(2%), increased chances of getting asthma and incidences of heart problems 1(1%) respectively.

**Table 10.** Negative health impacts of divorce on children

<b>Types of responses</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>%</b>
Headache	11	6.6
Stomachache	7	4.2
Bed wetting	17	10.2
Increased chances of getting infections	21	12.6
Susceptibility to sickness	39	23.4
Increased chances of getting stroke	4	2.4
Increased chances of getting asthma	1	0.6
Increased rates of mortality	4	2.4
Weaken immune system	27	16.2
Digestive problems	9	5.4
Incidences of heart problems	1	0.6
High rates of sexually transmitted infections	22	13.2
Others specify	3	1.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>100</b>

Elaborating on negative economic impacts of divorce on children, participants subscribed to differing opinions as shown in table 11 below. difficulty in paying school fees31(15%), increase unmet financial needs29(14%), decreased access to adequate nutrition food23(11%), increased financial pressure on single parent to provide21(10%), increased chances of living on child maintenance allowance19(9%), increased worries about money for basic needs17(8%), increased household financial instability and difficulty in attaining higher income at adulthood13(6%) respectively, increased chances of experiencing poverty in adulthood12(6%), difficulties in upward financial mobility in the future11(5%), decreased in future financial prospect9(4%), others specify7(3%); and increased chances of living on public support3(1%).

**Table 11.** Negative economic impacts of divorce on children

<b>Types of responses</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>%</b>
Increased household financial instability	13	6.24
Increased financial pressure on single parent to provide	21	10.08
Increase unmet financial needs	29	13.92
Difficulty in paying school fees	31	14.88
Increased chances of experiencing poverty in adulthood	12	5.76
Increased worries about money for basic needs	17	8.16
Decreased in future financial prospect	9	4.32
Increased chances of living on public support	3	1.44
Increased chances of living on child maintenance allowance	19	9.12
Difficulties in upward financial mobility in the future	11	5.28
Decreased access to adequate nutrition food	23	11.04
Difficulty in attaining higher income at adulthood	13	6.24
Others specify	7	3.36
<b>Total</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>100</b>

Lamenting on the negative physical impacts of divorce on children, participants felt as captured in table 12 below: increased chances of stunted growth39(14%), decreased in rate of growth33(12%), increased exposure to physical abuse31(12%), weight gain due to relief from conflict27(10%), increased in caregiver abuse25(9%), decreased in weight23(9%), increased neighborhood abuse and decreased in extracurricular activities18(7%) respectively, increased chances of deformity due to neglect17(6%), increased chances of becoming obese14(5%), increased chances of stroke attacks11(4%), increased chances of motor impairments7(3%); and Others specify3(1%).



**Table 12:** Negative physical impacts of divorce on children

<b>Types of responses</b>	<b>No. of responses</b>	<b>% of responses</b>
Decreased in weight	23	8.51
Increased chances of stroke attacks	11	4.07
Weight gain due to relief from conflict	27	9.99
Decreased in rate of growth	33	12.21
Increased exposure to physical abuse	31	11.65
Increased neighborhood abuse	18	6.66
Increased in caregiver abuse	25	9.25
Decreased in extracurricular activities	18	6.66
Increased chances of becoming obese	14	5.26
Increased chances of motor impairments	7	2.59
Increased chances of stunted growth	39	14.43
Increased chances of deformity due to neglect	17	6.29
Others specify	3	1.12
<b>Total</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>100</b>

Reacting to the negative mental or cognitive impacts of divorce on the children, respondents felt variedly as copulated in table 13 below: slowness in mental development and difficulty in handling difficult matters 32(13%) respectively, difficulty in understanding simple instructions 30(13%), difficulty in grasping complex matters and difficulty in concentrating long 28(12%) respectively, exhibition of strange behaviors 23(10%), attention deficiency 21(9%), difficulty in analyzing simple matters 17(7%), mental retardation 11(5%), mental illness 9(4%); and others specify 6(3%).

**Table 13.** Negative mental or cognitive impacts of divorce on children

<b>Types of responses</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>%</b>
Mental illness	9	3.78
Mental retardation	11	4.62
Slowness in mental development	32	13.44
Difficulty in analyzing simple matters	17	7.14
Attention deficiency	21	8.82
Difficulty in grasping complex matters	28	11.76
Difficulty in concentrating long	28	11.76
Difficulty in understanding simple instructions	30	12.6
Difficulty in handling difficult matters	32	13.44
Exhibition of strange behaviors	23	9.66
Others specify	6	2.53
<b>Total</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>100</b>

Reacting to the negative social impacts of divorce on children, respondents opined variedly as captured in table 14 underneath. Decrease in child-parent bond 33(10%), decreased in daily contacts with noncustodial parent and poor social skills and tough childhood 31(9%) respectively, increased chances to be associated with antisocial children 29(9%), decreased in discipline 28(8%), disruption in parental love and care 23(7%), fear of being rejected by neighbors 21(6%), unplanned change in homes 20(6%), being victim of single parenting stress and being victim of teenage pregnancy 19(6%) respectively, increased negativity 17(5%), viewing marriages as temporal engagements 15(5%), damage in self-confidence 13(4%), decreases in trust and satisfaction in romantic relationships 12(4%), increased likelihood to live with drug abuser parent 9(3%), decreased interest in fun activities 7(2%); and others specify 3(1%).

**Table 14.** Negative social impacts of divorce on children

<b>Types of responses</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>%</b>
Decreased in daily contacts with noncustodial parent	31	9.39
Decreases in trust and satisfaction in romantic relationships	12	3.63
Viewing marriages as temporal engagements	15	4.54
Fear of being rejected by neighbors	21	6.36
Increased chances to be associated with antisocial children	29	8.78
Poor social skills and tough childhood	31	9.39
Disruption in parental love and care	23	6.96
Decrease in child-parent bondage	33	9.99
Being victim of single parenting stress	19	5.75
Decreased in discipline	28	8.48
Increased negativity	17	5.15
Unplanned change in homes	20	6.06
Decreased interest in fun activities	7	2.12
Increased likeliness to live with drug abuser parent	9	2.72
Damage in self-confidence	13	3.93
Being victim of teenage pregnancy	19	5.75
Others specify	3	0.90
<b>Total</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>100</b>

Commenting on negative impacts of divorce on living conditions of the children, respondents felt as tabulated in table 15 below: high incidence of experiencing evictions 31(15%), living in crowded rooms 27(13%), relocating to remote areas 22(11%), low standard of living and high incidence of living in insecure compounds 19(9%) respectively, living in poor neighborhood and increased worrying about adequate accommodation 17(8%) respectively, feeling rejected and insecure in new settlements 13(6%), living in poor housing conditions and sense of loss in new community 11(5%) respectively, feeling different with unfamiliar families or children 9(4%); and others specify 7(3%).

**Table 15.** Negative impacts of divorce on living conditions of the children

<b>Types of responses</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>%</b>
Living in poor housing conditions	11	5.41
Relocating to remote areas	22	10.83
Living in crowded rooms	27	13.30
Living in poor neighborhood	17	8.37
Low standard of living	19	9.35
Sense of loss in new community	11	5.41
Feeling different with unfamiliar families or children	9	4.43
Feeling rejected and insecure in new settlements	13	6.40
Increased worrying about adequate accommodation	17	8.37
High incidence of living in insecure compounds	19	9.35
High incidence of experiencing evictions	31	15.27
Others specify	7	3.44
<b>Total</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>100</b>

In responding to a similar question whether divorce has any negative impacts on the spiritual wellbeing of the children, participants opined as demonstrated in table 16 underneath: increased chances of being not moral 31(11%), increased chances of behaving antisocially 29(11%), increased chances of not knowing their religion 28(10%), increased chances of changing religion 27(10%), increased chances of failure in religious obligations 23(8%), increased chances of not going to mosques/churches regularly and increased chances of following custodial parent religion and increased chances of being in conflict with the law 21(8%) respectively, increased chances of not attending religious functions 19(7%), increased chances of not attending religious classes 17(6%), increased chances of faith abandonment 14(5%), increased chances of having two or more religions 13(5%); and others specify 9(3%).

**Table 16.** Negative impacts of divorce on the spiritual wellbeing of the children

Types of responses	Responses	%
Increased chances of faith abandonment	14	5.12
Increased chances of failure in religious obligations	23	8.42
Increased chances of not knowing their religion	28	10.25
Increased chances of not attending religious classes	17	6.22
Increased chances of not attending religious functions	19	6.95
Increased chances of not going to mosques/churches regularly	21	7.69
Increased chances of being not moral	31	11.35
Increased chances of changing religion	27	9.89
Increased chances of having two or more religions	13	4.76
Increased chances of following custodial parent religion	21	7.69
Increased chances of behaving antisocially	29	10.62
Increased chances of being in conflict with the law	21	7.69
Others specify	9	3.29
<b>Total</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>100</b>

Commenting on the negative impacts of divorce on the relationship between children and divorced parents, respondents felt variedly as illustrated in table 17 below: decreased in respecting noncustodial parent 32(12%), nonresident parents being viewed as irresponsible 28(11%), feeling angry against noncustodial parent 26(10%), limited communication with nonresident parent 25(10%), increased chances of hating parents 23(9%), nonresident parent being mistrusted and increased chances of labeling parents as evil 21(8%) respectively, not wanting to associate with noncustodial parent and talking unkind things about parents 19(7%) respectively, threatening the ties with the nonresidential parent 17(7%), alleging parents of having moral lapses 13(5%), increased chances of blame for divorcing 9(3%); and others specify 6(2%).

**Table 17.** Negative impacts of divorce on the relationship between children and divorced parents

Types of responses	No. of responses	% of responses
Increased chances of blame for divorcing	9	3.47
Increased chances of hating parents	23	8.88
Nonresident parent being viewed as irresponsible	28	10.81
Nonresident parent being mistrusted	21	8.10
Threatening the ties with the nonresidential parent	17	6.56
Feeling angry against noncustodial parent	26	10.03
Decreased in respecting noncustodial parent	32	12.35
Increased chances of labeling parents as evil	21	8.10
Not wanting to associate with noncustodial parent	19	7.33
Limited communication with nonresident parent	25	9.65
Talking unkind things about parents	19	7.33
Alleging parents of having moral lapses	13	5.01
Others specify	6	2.31
<b>Total</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>100</b>

In a similar question regarding the negative impacts of divorce on the relationship between children and their grandparents, participants subscribed to varying opinions as mapped out in table 18 underneath: missing noncustodial grandparents jokes and humane treatment 31(14%), weakening bondage between noncustodial grandparents 29(13%), disinterest in noncustodial family traditions and celebrations 23(11%), limited communication with noncustodial grandparents 21(10%), lack of respect for noncustodial grandparents 20(9%), lack of sympathy for noncustodial grandparents 19(9%), disinterest in noncustodial grandparents' family matters and lack of communication with noncustodial grandparents 17(7%) respectively, mistrusting noncustodial grandparents 15(7%), blaming grandparents for the divorce 13(6%), increased hate towards noncustodial grandparents 11(5%); and others specify 4(2%).

**Table 18.** Negative impacts of divorce on the relationship between children and their grandparents

<b>Types of responses</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>%</b>
Mistrusting noncustodial grandparents	15	6.81
Blaming grandparents for the divorce	13	5.90
Disinterest in noncustodial grandparents' family matters	17	7.72
Disinterest in noncustodial family traditions and celebrations	23	10.45
Lack of respect for noncustodial grandparents	20	9.09
Lack of sympathy for noncustodial grandparents	19	8.63
Missing noncustodial grandparents jokes and humane treatments	31	14.09
Weakening bondage between noncustodial grandparents	29	13.18
Increased hate towards noncustodial grandparents	11	4.99
Lack of communication with noncustodial grandparents	17	7.72
Limited communication with noncustodial grandparents	21	9.54
Others specify	4	1.81
<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>100</b>

In describing the state of affairs between children and their divorced parents in the community, participants felt differently: sometimes poor 35(20%), sometimes bad 31(18%), sometimes very bad 25(14%), sometimes good 23(13%), sometimes very good and sometimes very poor 19(11%) respectively, I don't know 9(5%), sometimes excellent and others specify 7(4%) respectively.

Lamenting on the negative impacts of divorce on the relationship between children and their peers, participants subscribed to differing opinions as manifested in table 19 below: frequent unnecessary arguments and quarrels 27(16%), frequent fight 21(13%), unnecessary jealousy towards peers achievements 19(11%), withdrawal from peers' activities 18(11%), decreased in social bondage with peers 16(10%), unnecessary hatred towards peers 15(9%), limited interaction with peers 11(7%), limited peer visitations 10(6%), limited trust in peers 9, decreased sympathy for peers and decreased in social and educational support to peers 9(5%) respectively; and others specify 2(1%).

**Table 19.** Negative impacts of divorce on the relationship between children and their peers

<b>Types of responses</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>%</b>
Withdrawal from peers' activities	18	10.84
Limited interaction with peers	11	6.62
Limited trust in peers	9	5.42
Frequent fight	21	12.65
Frequent unnecessary arguments and quarrels	27	16.26
Unnecessary hatred towards peers	15	9.03
Unnecessary jealousy towards peers achievements	19	11.44
Limited peer visitations	10	6.02
Decreased in social and educational support to peers	9	5.42
Decreased in social bondage with peers	16	9.63
Decreased sympathy for peers	9	5.42
Others specify	2	1.20
<b>Total</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>100</b>

Reacting to whether divorce has any positive impact on children participants felt variedly as captured in table 20 underneath: feeling relief for being out of marital conflict 31(13%), improved health because of decreased stress, increased chances of good health; and increased chances to concentrate on their education 21(9%) respectively, increased chances of expanding social networks 19(8%), increased chances to advance their career and increased chances of not being involved in antisocial behaviors 18(8%) respectively, increased chances of living in stable and nurturing environment 17(7%), more quality time with parents especially the custodial one 16(7%), increased chances of picking new relieving hobbies 14(6%), increased chances of developing good social skills and increased chances of proper upbringing 11(5%) respectively, decreased in proneness to drug abuse 7(3%); and others specify 5(2%).

**Table 20.** Positive impacts of divorce on children

<b>Types of responses</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>%</b>
Decreased in proneness to drug abuse	7	3.04
More quality time with parents especially the custodial one	16	6.95
Improved health because of decreased stress	21	9.13
Increased chances of developing good social skills	11	4.78
Feeling relief for being out of marital conflict	31	13.47
Increased chances to advance their career	18	7.82
Increased chances to concentrate on their education	21	9.13
Increased chances of picking new relieving hobbies	14	6.08
Increased chances of expanding social networks	19	8.26
Increased chances of good health	21	9.13
Increased chances of not being involved in antisocial behaviors	18	7.82
Increased chances of proper up bringing	11	4.78
Increased chances of living in stable and nurturing environment	17	7.39
Others specify	5	2.17
<b>Total</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>100</b>

In commenting on the negative impacts of divorce on the community, respondents subscribed to differing opinions as shown in table 21 below: increase in criminality49(21%), threaten children's general welfare42(18%), diminish in children's educational attainments and increased in school dropouts31(13%) respectively, weaken family structures and ties27(12%), increase in unwanted pregnancies and children and increase in substance abuse21(9%) respectively, decreased in religious consciousness18(8%), increase early sexual debut especially the girls13(6%), increase in health problems11(5%); and others specify2(1%).

**Table 21.** Negative impacts of divorce on the community

<b>Types of responses</b>	<b>No. of responses</b>	<b>% of responses</b>
Weaken family structures and ties	27	10.15
Threaten children's general welfare	42	15.78
Increase early sexual debut especially the girls	13	4.88
Increase in unwanted pregnancies and children	21	7.89
Decreased in religious consciousness	18	6.76
Diminish in children's educational attainments	31	11.65
Increase in health problems	11	4.13
Increase in substance abuse	21	7.89
Increase in criminality	49	18.42
Increased in school dropouts	31	11.65
Others specify	2	0.75
<b>Total</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>100</b>

### **Level of Knowledge of the Support Needed by Children of Divorced Parents**

While the vast majority 28(80%) of the participants subscribed to children of divorced parents needing support, they significantly vary on the types as tabulated in table 22 underneath: education34 (20%), financial 31(19%), counseling and guidance27 (16%), emotional25(15%), material23(14%), shelter13(8%), security9(5%); and others specify5(3%).

**Table 22.** Types of supports children of divorced parents need

Types of responses	No. of responses	% of responses
Financial	31	18.56
Material	23	13.77
Educational	34	20.35
Shelter	13	7.78
counseling and guidance	27	16.16
Emotional	25	14.97
Security	9	5.38
Others specify	5	2.99
<b>Total</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>100</b>

In a follow up question as to who should be the main providers of these supports, participants felt differently as enlisted in table 23 below: fathers of the children 31(20%), central government 27(17%), non-governmental organizations 21(13%), community based organizations 17(11%), religious organizations 15(9%), mothers of the children 10(6%), local government authorities 9(6%), relatives of divorcees, the community and development partners 7(4%) respectively, others specify 4(3%); and parents of the divorcees 3(2%).

**Table 23.** Main providers of support for children of divorced parents

Types of responses	No. of responses	% of responses
Mothers of the children	10	6.32
Relatives of divorcees	7	4.43
Parents of the divorcees	3	1.89
Fathers of the children	31	19.62
The community	7	4.43
Community Base Organizations	17	10.75
Religious organizations	15	9.49
Non-Governmental Organizations	21	13.29
Local Government Authorities	9	5.69
Central government	27	17.08
Development partners	7	4.43
Others specify	4	2.53
<b>Total</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>100</b>

### Level of Knowledge of the Preventive Methods of Divorce

Commenting on divorce being preventable, majority 24(69%) responded in the affirmative, however, they vastly differ in the methods as manifested in table 24 underneath: prevention or minimization of marital disputes 33(12%), provision of pre and post marriage counseling 32(12%), quick amicable settlement of marital disputes 29(10%), financial support to

families in need 28(10%), conducting public sensitization on divorce impacts 26(9%), conducting public sensitization on importance of marriage and psychosocial support provision to difficult marriages 23(8%) respectively, banning early and forced marriages and incorporation of key social problems in schools curriculum 21(7%) respectively, enactment and enforcement of strict laws against divorce 19(7%), discouraging early and forced marriages 17(6%); and others specify 7(3%).

**Table 24.** Methods of preventing divorce in the community

<b>Types of responses</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>%</b>
Banning early and forced marriages	21	7.52
Discouraging early and forced marriages	17	6.09
Provision of pre and post marriage counseling	32	11.46
Conducting public sensitization on divorce impacts	26	9.21
Conducting public sensitization on importance of marriage	23	8.24
Enactment and enforcement of strict laws against divorce	19	6.81
Prevention or minimization of marital disputes	33	11.82
Quick amicable settlement of marital disputes	29	10.39
Psychosocial support provision to difficult marriages	23	8.24
Financial support to families in need	28	10.03
Incorporation of key social problems in schools curriculum	21	7.52
Others specify	7	2.50
<b>Total</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>100</b>

In the event prevention is not achievable participants subscribed to varying negative impacts mitigation strategies as illustrated in table 25 below: divorcees maintaining healthy relationship 33(11%), ensuring both parents continue to support children and attending regular counseling sessions when needed 31(10%) respectively, avoiding custody disputes, divorcees supporting each other in taking care of the children; and custodial parents praising good qualities of nonresident one 29(9%) respectively, civilly handling of marital disputes and assuring children the parents still care 23(7%) respectively, parents continuous involvement in children issues 21(7%), quick and permanent resolution of marital conflicts 18(6%), assuring children that the divorce is not their fault 16(5%), sharing imminent divorce early and gradually 9(3%); and others specify 7(2%).

**Table 25.** Methods of mitigating the negative impacts of divorce on children

<b>Types of responses</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>%</b>
Sharing imminent divorce early and gradually	9	2.86
Parents continuous involvement in children issues	21	6.68
Avoiding custody disputes	29	9.23
Quick and permanent resolution of marital conflicts	18	5.73
Allowing regular visit to noncustodial parent and relatives	15	4.77
Civilly handling of marital disputes	23	7.32
Ensuring both parents continue to support children	31	9.87
Assuring children that the divorce is not their fault	16	5.09
Assuring children the parents still care	23	7.32
Attending regular counseling sessions when needed	31	9.87
Custodial parents praising good qualities of nonresident one	29	9.23
Divorcees maintaining healthy relationship	33	10.50
Divorcees supporting each other in taking care of the children	29	9.23
Others specify	7	2.22
<b>Total</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>100</b>

Lamenting on those to be involved in resolving marital conflicts participants opined as manifested in table 26 below: community elders 29(21%), fathers in-law 21(16%), mothers in-law 19(14%), immediate neighbors 17(12%), social workers 15(11%), elder sisters in-law 11(8%), elder brothers in-law 9(7%), psychologists 5(4%), others specify 4(3%), lawyers 3(2%), children 2(2%); and courts 1(1%).

**Table 26.** Persons to be involved in settling marital disputes

<b>Types of responses</b>	<b>No. of responses</b>	<b>% of responses</b>
Mothers in-law	19	13.97
Fathers in-law	21	15.44
Elder brothers in-law	9	6.61
Elder sisters in-law	11	8.08
Immediate neighbors	17	12.49
Community elders	29	21.32
Children	2	1.47
Social workers	15	11.02
Psychologists	5	3.67
Lawyers	3	2.20
Courts	1	0.73
Others specify	4	2.94
<b>Total</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>100</b>

While the majority 23(66%) subscribed to very low participation of children in the resolution of marital conflict, participants significantly differ in persons with the overriding decision in marital conflict settlement as depicted in the table 27 underneath: husbands 24(21%), fathers in-law 18(16%), community elders 17(15%), wives 14(12%), mothers in-law 11(10%), elder brothers in-law 9(8%), children 6(5%), elder sisters in-law 5(4%), social workers 4(4%), members of the compound 2(2%), psychologists 0(0%), lawyers 0(0%); and courts 0(0%) respectively

**Table 27.** Persons with the overriding decision in marital conflict settlement

<b>Types of responses</b>	<b>No. of responses</b>	<b>% of responses</b>
Husbands	24	21.05
Wives	14	12.28
Mothers in-law	11	9.64
Fathers in-law	18	15.78
Elder brothers in-law	9	7.89
Elder sisters in-law	5	4.38
Members of the compound	2	1.75
Community elders	17	14.91
Children	6	5.26
Social workers	4	3.50
Psychologists	0	0
Lawyers	0	0
Courts	0	0
Others specify	4	3.50
<b>Total</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>100</b>

To prevent divorce and its negative effects participants subscribed to different roles social welfare institutions can play as illustrated in the table 28 below: prevention of forced and early marriage 31(15%), conducting public sensitization on divorce negative impacts 27(13%), provision of pre and post counseling 23(11%), promote enactment and enforcement of strict laws against divorce and lobby incorporation of key social problems in schools curriculum 21(10%) respectively, provision of psychosocial support to spouses in conflict and provision of financial support to families in need 19(9%) respectively, conducting public sensitization on importance of marriage 18(9%), promotion of quick marital conflict resolution services 12(6%), promotion of stricter policies 11(5%); and others specify 5(2%).



**Table 28.** Social welfare institutions roles in preventing marital divorce

<b>Types of responses</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>%</b>
Provision of pre and post counseling	23	11.11
Conducting public sensitization on divorce negative impacts	27	13.04
Conducting public sensitization on importance of marriage	18	8.69
Promotion of quick marital conflict resolution services	12	5.79
Promote enactment and enforcement of strict laws against divorce	21	10.14
Promotion of stricter policies	11	5.31
Provision of psychosocial support to spouses in conflict	19	9.17
Prevention of forced and early marriage	31	14.97
Provision of financial support to families in need	19	9.17
Lobby incorporation of key social problems in schools curriculum	21	10.14
Others specify	5	2.41
<b>Total</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>100</b>

## DATA INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

### Level of Knowledge of the Negative Impacts of Divorce on the Children and Persons mostly to be Negatively Affected When It Occurred

The results indicate a strong awareness of divorce negatively affecting people though differing on who is mostly affected: children of the divorcees, divorcees themselves, relatives of the divorcees, members of the extended family, mothers in-law, fathers in-law, community, elders in the family; and others specify. This concurs with men were more vulnerable to short-term consequence of divorce for subjective measures well-being, high risk of adopting bad health behavior, decline in satisfaction with family life, higher dissatisfaction with custodial arrangement, greater feelings of loneliness and social isolation, Leopold & Kalmijin (2016) as cited in Leopold, T. (2018).

In the case of the medium-term consequences both men and women are similar in terms of subjective economic well-being, mental health, physical health, psychological well-being, residential movement, home ownership, satisfaction with homework, chances of repartnering, social integration with friends; and feeling of loneliness, as cited in Leopold, T. (2018).

Women persistently and largely suffer disproportionate losses in household income and associated increases in their risk of poverty and single parenting, as cited in Leopold, T. (2018). Girls affected by divorce are significantly less likely to be attending school, Chae, S. (2016).

After divorce, women are more likely than men to face significant financial challenges, receive public assistance, lose health insurance, and have decreased earning potential, Cohen, G.J. et al.,(2016).

### Types of Negative Emotional Impacts of Divorce on Children

The study revealed that divorce negatively affect children development and relationships. For instance, emotionally, it results to: feeling depress, feeling grief, feeling disappointed, decreased in self-esteem, violence thoughts and feelings, getting annoyed easily, feeling lonely and insecure, mood swings and irritability, frequent guilt feeling/embarrassment, withdrawal from family members, withdrawal from friends and acquaintances, anger towards oneself; and others specify. This is supported by parental break up was associated with a subsequent increase in the level of symptoms of anxiety/depression in the children, but not with any significant change in opposition behavior, Desrosier, et al., (2013). Children from single-parent families and divorce homes face the challenges of stress and well-being as well as deprivation from love and basic needs, Majzub et al., (2012). Divorce increased anxiety, depression, anger, internalizing disorders, externalizing disorders, and decreased self-esteem and increased in suicide, Cartwright, 2006 as cited in Czapiewski, S.M. (2014). Children whose parents divorced at a young age when developing attachment, have a high chance of developing insecure attachments compared to children whose parents are still together Emery et al., (2013) as cited in Czapiewski, S.M. (2014). Children of divorced mothers have poorer and less stimulating home environment since their mothers despite their best intentions, are less able than married mothers to give emotional support to their children, Miller et al., (2002) as cited in Fagan, P.F. (n.d.). Child neglect, which is frequently more psychologically damaging than physical abuse, is much more commonly present in families of separated and divorced persons than of married persons, Egami, Y. (1996) as cited in Fagan et al., (2012).

### **Educational Impacts of Divorce on Children**

Similarly, the study unearthed some negative impacts on the education of the children; decreased in performance, absence from school, decreased motivation to work hard in class, difficulty in concentrating in class, decreased educational aspiration, decreased parents participation in home works, becoming dropouts, decreased engagement in school activities, low educational attainment at adulthood, changing school prematurely, decreased chances of attending university, repeating a class, increase chances of expulsion, increased chances of suspension; and others specify. This is substantiated by parental break-up is associated with an immediate deterioration in school performance, Kim, (2011) as cited in Bernardi et al., (2014). Impacts of divorce on children include children interest ignored especially during court proceedings, absent of academic discussions and support, sparks a sharp increase in cortisol level and cardiac stress, lot of crying and feeding problems, poor sleeping patterns, a loss of bowel control, withdrawal from peers, poor academic performance, increase absenteeism and lack of educational support, etc., Chowdary, D. (2017). Majority felt that their parents' negative relationships affected their academics, Odenweller, B. (2014). Children with divorced parents, compared with continuously married parents, exhibit more conduct problems, have more emotional problems, obtain lower academic test scores, and school grades, and have more problems with social relationships, weaker emotional ties with parents especially fathers, Amato P. (2012). Parental divorce is associated with a lower probability of attaining university, and the divorce penalty is larger for children with highly educated parents as children of parents with low levels of education suffer less because their expected levels of educational attainment are already low to begin with, Bernardi et al. (2014).

### **Negative Behavioral Impacts of Divorce on Children**

Furthermore, the findings indicate some negative behavioral impacts on the children due to divorce: propensity for crime, disobedience, conduct disorder, uncooperative behaviors, becoming easily violent, delinquency, decreased success in handling romantic relationship, drug abuse, no forethought behavior, identity crisis, frequent involvement in risky behaviors, decreased success in managing future responsibilities; and others specify. This concurs with children who experience divorce often have an increase in antisocial behaviors, anxiety and depression, along with increased delinquent and aggressive behavior, self-blame and abandonment, Williams-Owens, W.M. (2017). An increase in deviant behavior such as, alcohol, drug, and cigarette use seen in adolescents after experiencing a parental divorce or separation, Mandich, (2011) as cited in Czapiewski, S.M. (2014). Children who experienced divorce are more likely to smoke, drink heavily, abuse substance, etc. as adults compared to those whose parents remained married, Furstenberg et al., (2002) as cited in Fagan et al. (2012). Amato 2001 as cited in Connolly, M.E. (n.d.), children from divorced families scored significantly lower on a variety of outcome namely academic achievements, conduct, psychological adjustment, and well-being and some can persist into adulthood. Van Dollen (2013) as cited in Odenweller, B. (2014), found higher levels of misbehavior and aggression, higher risk of committing suicide, less competence, more under controlled behavior, poorer academic performance and reduced likelihood of participating in tertiary education among divorced children.

### **Negative Health Impacts of Divorce on Children**

In the same vein the study unearthed some negative health impacts: susceptibility to sickness, weaken immune system, high rates of sexually transmitted infections, increased chances of getting infections, bed wetting, headache, digestive problems, stomachache, increased chances of getting stroke, increased rate of mortality, others specify, increased chances of getting asthma; and incidences of heart problems. This concurs with children of divorced families are more likely to have health problems e.g. injury, asthma, cancer, lungs problems, etc. and have a slightly heightened risk of fossilization and significantly increased risk of mortality, Romelsjo et al., (1992) as cited in Fagan et al., (2012). Children of divorce date more and thus have a higher turnover of dating partners and more failed romantic relationships, contributing to a larger number of sexual partners, risk factors for the acquisition of sexually transmitted diseases, and host of emotional repercussions, Biglan et al., (1992); Eng et al., (1997) as cited in Fagan et al., (2012). Daughters of divorced parents have more abortions than those of non-divorced parents, Aro et al., (1992) as cited in Fagan et al., (2012).

Despite the fact that married people are usually healthier than single, conflict in marriage can lead to poorer health conditions and risk of certain diseases like heart diseases as well as cancer and chronic pains, Fincham, B.S.R.H. (1999), Holt-Lunstand, J. et al., (2008) & Gharehbaghy, F. et al., (2010) as cited in Asadi, Z. S. et al., (2016).

### **Negative Economic Impacts of Divorce on Children**

Economically, the findings revealed some negative impacts on the children; difficulty in paying school fees, increase unmet financial needs, decreased access to adequate nutrition food, increased financial pressure on single parent to provide, increased chances of living on child maintenance allowance, increased worries about money for basic needs, increased household financial instability, difficulty in attaining higher income at adulthood, increased chances of experiencing poverty in adulthood, difficulties in upward financial mobility in the future, decreased in future financial prospect, others specify; and increased chances of living on public support. This is congruent with children who have experienced divorce, also experience financial instability, academic instability, employment instability, and have a tendency to use alcohol and cigarettes, Williams-Owens, W.M. (2017). Parents who divorced experience adverse effects on their physical, emotional, and financial well-being, which may also in turn affect their children, Anderson, J. (2014). Divorce has been shown to diminish a child's future competence in all areas of life, including family relationships, education, emotional well-being, and future earning power; these can persist into adulthood, Anderson, J. (2014).

Divorce often leads to a decline in financial security, their own real and subjective well-being because of reduction in resources for healthcare, education, after-school activities, access to cultural and entertainment goods; and purchase of everyday products, Carlson, M. et al., (2001) & Teachman, J. et al., (1994) as cited in Nunes-Costa, R. et al., (2009).

### **Negative Physical Impacts of Divorce on Children**

Equally, some negative physical impacts on the children were mapped out: increased chances of stunted growth, decreased in rate of growth, increased exposure to physical abuse, weight gain due to relief from conflict, increased in caregiver abuse, decreased in weight, increased neighborhood abuse, decreased in extracurricular activities, increased chances of deformity due to neglect, increased chances of becoming obese, increased chances of stroke attacks, increased chances of motor impairments; and others specify. This is substantiated by compared with continuously-married mothers, divorced mothers tend to be less affectionate and communicative with their children, and to discipline them more harshly and more inconsistently, especially during the first year following the divorce, Hetherington et al., (1996) as cited in Fagan, P.F. (n.d.).

Children experience decline in physical and psychological well-being which are triggered by factors like interpersonal conflict, parental psychopathology, decline in socio-economic level, inconsistency in parenting style, a parallel and conflicting co-parenting relationship between parents and low level of social support Nunes-Costa, R. et al., (2009).

Divorce is a stressor that should be considered by health professionals as it is potentially responsible for maladjusted neuropsychobiological responses and decline in children's physical health, Nunes-Costa, R. et al., (2009). Divorce negatively affect children physical, psychological, emotional safety and secured attachment to parents Koerner, A.F. et al., (2005), Fincham, B.S.R.H. (1999); & Gharehbaghy, F. et al., (2010) as cited in Asadi, Z. S. et al., (2016).

### **Negative Mental or Cognitive Impacts of Divorce on Children**

Similarly, the study unearthed some negative cognitive impacts: slowness in mental development, difficulty in handling difficult matters, difficulty in understanding simple instructions, difficulty in grasping complex matters, difficulty in concentrating long, exhibition of strange behaviors, attention deficiency, difficulty in analyzing simple matters, mental retardation, mental illness; and others specify. This is in agreement with more than a million children have experienced some level of social and cognitive harm from a parental divorce that has left them vulnerable, Fagan et al., (2012) as cited in Williams-Owens, W.M. (2017). Children growing up in a home with two stable and happy parents are one of the strongest protective factors against mental, physical, educational and peer-related problems Burman, et al., (1992) as cited in Lian T.C. (n.d.).

Poor quality life and financial hardship due to divorce leads to long-term decline in cognitive and social development, Nunes-Costa, R. et al., (2009). Children of intact families presented better performance in social and cognitive abilities, quality of attachment, and less behavioral problems, when compared to children of divorced parents, Nunes-Costa, R. et al., (2009).

### **Negative Social Impacts of Divorce on Children**

Similarly, the findings indicated some negative social impacts on the children: decrease in child-parent bondage, decreased in daily contacts with noncustodial parent, poor social skills and tough childhood, increased chances to be

associated with antisocial children, decreased in discipline, disruption in parental love and care, fear of being rejected by neighbors, unplanned change in homes, being victim of single parenting stress, being victim of teenage pregnancy, increased negativity, viewing marriages as temporal engagements, damage in self-confidence, decreases in trust and satisfaction in romantic relationships, increased likeliness to live with drug abuser parent, decreased interest in fun activities; and others specify. This is in agreement with children from divorced families are more likely to believe that marriage is not important prior to having children and are more likely to have a child out of wedlock, Fagan et al., (2012). Men whose parents divorced are inclined to be simultaneously hostile and 'rescuer' of the women to whom they are attracted, rather than the more open, affectionate, cooperative partner, more frequently found among men raised by parents of an intact marriage, Silvestri, S. (1985) cited in Fagan et al., (2012). Compared with continuously married mothers, divorced mothers tend to be less affectionate and communicative with their children, and discipline them more harshly and more inconsistently, especially during the first year following divorce, Hetherington et al., (1992) cited in Fagan et al., (2012). Divorced homes show a decrease in language stimulation, pride, affection, stimulation of academic behavior, encouragement of social maturity, and warmth directed towards the children, Fagan et al., (2012). The largest effects of divorce on children are indicated in externalizing behaviors like conduct disorders, antisocial behaviors, and problems with authority figures, Kelly et al., (2002) as cited in Connolly, M.E. (n.d.). Daughters of divorced parents are more likely to divorce, because of stronger commitment to work and plan to have few children. They cohabit more, attain less education, make less income, low paying jobs, learned destructive traits, poor interpersonal skills, less able to communicate comprehensively; all enhance the risk of divorce, McDemott et al., (n.d.).

### **Negative Impacts of Divorce on the Living Conditions of the Children**

Additionally, some negative impacts on the living conditions of the children were revealed; high incidence of experiencing evictions, living in crowded rooms, relocating to remote areas, low standard of living, high incidence of living in insecure compounds, living in poor neighborhood, increased worrying about adequate accommodation, feeling rejected and insecure in new settlements, living in poor housing conditions, sense of loss in new community, feeling different with unfamiliar families; and others specify. This concurs with children who changed residence showed more signs of negative development and signs of positive development less often than those who continued to live in their predivorce home. Children were not only losing their home but they were also losing their friends and sense of community from the neighborhood, Moxnes, (2003); Hooymann, et al., (2006), as cited in Czapiewski, S.M. (2014). Some children who experience marital disruption in adolescence may leave home 'at such young ages that resembles running away from home, Goldscheilder et al., (1998) as cited in Fagan, P.F. (n.d.). After divorce children regress, display anxiety and depressive symptoms, appear more irritable, demanding noncompliant, experience problems in social relationships and school performance Hetherington, E.M. et al., (199) as quoted in Lee, C. M., et al., (2000).

### **Negative Impacts of Divorce on the Spiritual Wellbeing of the Children**

Furthermore, the findings revealed some negative spiritual impacts on the children; increased chances of being immoral, increased chances of not knowing their religion, increased chances of behaving antisocially, increased chances of changing religion, increased chances of failure in religious obligations, increased chances of not going to mosques/churches regularly, increased chances of following custodial parent religion, increased chances of being in conflict with the law, increased chances of not attending religious functions, increased chances of not attending religious classes, increased chances of faith abandonment, increased chances of having two or more religions; and others specify. This is congruent with divorce detrimentally impacts individuals and society capacity in numerous other ways like diminishes frequency of worship, children learning capacity and educational attainments, household income and deeply cuts earning capacity, increase crimes and antisocial behaviors, weaken children's health and longevity; and increases behavioral emotional, and psychiatric risks, including suicide, Fagan et al., (2012). Divorce has pervasive weakening effects on children and on all of the five major institutions of society- the family, the church, the school, the marketplace; and government itself, Fagan et al., (2012). Divorce diminishes children's future competence in all five society's major tasks or institutions: family, school, religion, marketplace and government, Fagan et al., (2012).

Growing up in a single parent family is positively associated with religious disaffiliation and religious switching and negatively associated with regular religious attendance, Uecker, J. E. et al., (2012).

Children of divorced parents are not only unable to reconcile religious teachings that emphasize the sanctity of marriage with their family experience but their religion as a mean of resolving such cognitive dissonance, a process referred to as sacred loss or desecration, Denton (2012; Ellison et al., (2011); Mahoney et al., (2003) as cited in Uecker, J. E. et al., (2012). Due to stigmatization and discrimination meted on divorcees, especially in communities that are highly populated by married-parents and where divorce is regarded sinful, this does not only lead to emotional distress,

anger towards God or sacred loss; diminishing participation in religious activities which filter down to their children, (Edgell 2006; Zhai et al. 2007) as cited in Uecker, J. E. et al., (2012).

Divorce disrupts intergenerational transmission of religious values and practice. Offspring who are raised by both biological parents are more likely to adopt their parents' religious practices and conviction, Myers (1996) & Regnerus et al., (2004) as cited in Zhai, I. E. et al., (2008).

### **Negative Impacts of Divorce on the Relationship Between Children and Divorced Parents**

Equally, the findings revealed some negative impacts on child-parent relationship: decreased in respecting noncustodial parent, nonresident parent being viewed as irresponsible, feeling angry against noncustodial parent, limited communication with nonresident parent, increased chances of hating parents, nonresident parent being mistrusted, increased chances of labeling parents as evil, not wanting to associate with noncustodial parent, talking unkind things about parents, threatening the ties with the nonresidential parent, alleging parents of having moral lapses, increased chances of blame for divorcing; and others specify. This is supported by divorce leads to a decline in children's ability to trust their fathers, King, V. (2002) as cited in Fagan et al., (2012). Parental divorce makes it more difficult for children to trust their parents, Woodward et al., (2000) as cited in Fagan, P.F. (n.d.). The primary effects of divorce (and of the parental conflict that precedes the divorce) is a decline in the relationship between parents and children, Meneghan et al., (1995) as cited in Fagan et al., (2012). Divorce leads to disruptions in the parent-child relationship, continuing discord between former spouses, loss of emotional support, economic hardship, and increase in the number of other negative events, Fagan et al., (2012). The losses of divorce can have a significant effect on a child but the loss of the parent-child relationship seems to be the most detrimental to the child as it can affect the child emotionally, behaviorally, and socially, Czapiewski, S.M. (2014). The stress of divorce tends to weaken and even damage the parent-child relation for divorced mothers Fagan, P.F. (n.d.).

### **Negative Impacts of Divorce on the Relationship Between Children and Grandparents**

In the same vein, the study revealed some negative impacts of divorce on the children-grandparents relationships: missing noncustodial grandparents jokes and humane treatment, weakening bondage between noncustodial grandparents, disinterest in noncustodial family traditions and celebrations, limited communication with noncustodial grandparents, lack of respect for noncustodial grandparents, lack of sympathy for noncustodial grandparents, disinterest in noncustodial grandparents' family matters, lack of communication with noncustodial grandparents, mistrusting noncustodial grandparents, blaming grandparents for the divorce, increased hate towards noncustodial grandparents; and others specify. This concurs with as the children's relationship with their fathers weakens after divorce, their relationship with their stepfamily and paternal grandparents become distant, negative or even non-existent, Agerbo et al., (2002) as cited in Haimi et al., (2016). Paternal grandparents frequently cease to see their grandchildren as their grandchildren's contact with their own father, the grandparents' son, diminishes, Finch, J. et al., (1990). Grandparents and grandchildren, particularly those on the father's side of the family, have less frequent contact after the parents stop living together when compared to intact family, Oppelaar & Dykstra (2004) as cited in Maaikje J. (2018).

### **Negative Impacts of Divorce on the Relationship Between Children and Peers**

Similarly, the findings unearthed some negative impacts on the relationship between the children and their peers: frequent unnecessary arguments and quarrels, frequent fight, unnecessary jealousy towards peers achievements, withdrawal from peers' activities, decreased in social bondage with peers, unnecessary hatred towards peers, limited interaction with peers, limited peer visitations, limited trust in peers, decreased sympathy for peers, decreased in social and educational support to peers; and others specify. This conform with children of divorced parents did worse when rated by both parents and teachers on peer relationships, hostility towards adults, anxiety, withdrawal, inattention, and aggression, Giudubaldi et al., (1987) as cited in Fagan et al., (2012). College students from divorced families use violence more frequently to resolve conflict and more likely to be aggressive and physically violent with their friends, male or female, Biilingahm et al., (1993) as cited in Fagan et al., (2012). Adolescents faced the normal reactions towards divorce by fearing peer ridicule, by being involved in the blaming self and others for divorce, Majzub et al., (2012). Children of divorced parents are more likely to have hostile relationships with their siblings than children from married (or intact) families, Sheehan, G. et al., (2004).

### **Positive Impacts of Marital Conflict and Divorce on Children**

Interestingly, divorce is found to have some positive effects on the children as revealed: feeling relief for being out of marital conflict, improved health because of decreased stress, increased chances of good health, increased chances to concentrate on their education, increased chances of expanding social networks, increased chances to advance their career, increased chances of not being involved in antisocial behaviors, increased chances of living in stable and nurturing environment, more quality time with parents especially the custodial one, increased chances of picking new relieving hobbies, increased chances of developing good social skills, increased chances of proper upbringing, decreased in proneness to drug abuse; and others specify. This is substantiated by children tend to show improvements in well-being when divorced removes them from high-conflict household and decrements in well-being when divorce removes them from low-conflict household, Strohschein, et al., (2005) as cited in Amato, P. R. et al., (2011). While every marriage relationship is as unique as the individuals it contains, some degree of conflict is usually necessary to keep a marriage dynamic rather than static, Ashford et al., (2006) as cited in Lian T.C. (n.d.). Nadir (2003), successful marriages are not those in which there has never been conflict but those in which conflicts have served useful purposes. Some conflicts can also be positive if they are constructively dealt with as they can bring differences of view 'out in the open', lead people to deal with issues together rather than stayed isolated, stimulate change and progress, and 'clear the uncleared' between parties, the Chartered Institute of Arbitrator as cited in Arora S. (2015) & Tolorunleke, C.A. (2014).

Conflicts are among the most important determinants of the quantity and quality of relationships among family member, Koerner, A.F. et al., (2005) as cited in Asadi, Z. S. et al., (2016). Conflicts are necessary and valuable for the evolution of marriage, Ostenon, J.A. et al., (2014) as cited in Asadi, Z. S. et al., (2016). Conflicts that are properly managed can help couples learn more from each other and improved their relationships, Recker, N. et al., (2010), as cited in Asadi, Z. S. et al., (2016). Conflict in a broader marital context, which is itself seen as situated in a broader ecological niche, bode well for advancing understanding and leading to more powerful preventive and therapeutic prevention, Fincham, F.D. (n.d.).

### **Negative Impacts of Divorce on the Community**

Equally, some negative impacts on the community were revealed including: increase in criminality, threaten children's general welfare, diminish in children's educational attainments, increased in school dropouts, weaken family structures and ties, increase in unwanted pregnancies and children, increase in substance abuse, decreased in religious consciousness, increase early sexual debut especially the girls, increase in health problems; and others specify. This dovetails with divorce adversely affects society by diminishing the child's future competence, weakening family structure, contributing to early sexual experimentation leading to increased cost for society, diminishing frequency of religious worship, diminishing a child's learning capacity and educational attainment, and reducing the household income, increasing crime rates and substance use, increasing risk of school suspensions, and increasing emotional and mental health risks, including suicide, Anderson, J. (2014). It permanently weakens the family and relationship between children and parents, leads to destructive conflict management methods, diminished social competence, loss of virginity, diminished sense of masculinity or femininity, more trouble in dating, more cohabitation, greater likelihood of divorce, higher expectations of divorce later in life; and decreased desire to have children, Fagan et al., (2012). Conflict if not constructively resolved can be stressful, physically and psychologically draining, can sour and even destroy relationships, are time-consuming, divert people's attention and energy away from more useful activities, can be costly in terms of the interruption of normal relations or the expenses of dealing with the conflict, can make other problems or issues more difficult to resolve too, Arora, S. (2015).

Divorce decrease the performance of divorcees and the compatibility of the children and increase conflicts among all family members (parents and children as well as between siblings), Koerner, A.F. et al., (2005) as cited in Asadi, Z. S. et al., (2016).

Divorce detrimentally affect individuals and society in numerous ways: reduction in religious practices, diminishes children learning capacity and educational attainments; reduces household income and deeply cuts individual earning capacity, leads to increase in crimes and the cost of its associated programmes; and decreases health and life longevity, Fagan, P.F. et al., (2012).

### **Types of Supports Children of Divorced Parents Need**

The findings revealed a high level consciousness of the support needed by children of divorced parents; education, financial, counseling and guidance, emotional, material, shelter, security; and others specify. This is supported by

counseling and parent education strategies need to be developed and implemented to help reduce the effects of divorce among adolescents, Majzub et al., (2012). Interferences that focus on increasing coping mechanisms and effective communication help to reduce negative effects on the children and aid in the successful reorganization of the family following divorce or remarriage, and family therapy is one of them, Zaharychuk, C. (2017). Family therapy was effective for social and psychological problem-solving as it promoted effective involvement of family members, and improved the family members' social and psychological performance, healthy communication patterns, and satisfaction in relationship, Kumar et al., (2014) as cited in Asadi et al., (2016).

Educating divorcees on the negative impacts of divorce, strengthening own support systems, developing nonadversarial coparenting relationship and maintaining a quality parent-child relationship will help their child adapt, Lee, C. M. et al.,(2000).

Solution-focused therapy was found to efficiently enhance intimacy in couples with problematic marriage. So too it is with acceptance and commitment therapy, Hajian, A. et al., (2013) & Arabnejad S. et al., (2014) as cited in Asadi, Z. S. et al., (2016).

### **Providers of Support for Children of Divorced Parents**

The key providers of the support were identified as: fathers of the children, central government, non-governmental organizations, community based organizations, religious organizations, mothers of the children, local government authorities, relatives of divorcees, the community, development partners, others specify; and parents of the divorcees. This concurs with when counselors and society support the diverse composition of families, this reorganization can happen with less distress for children involved, Zaharychuk, C. (2017).

Healthcare professionals are well placed to assist families in making the adjustment to a new set of demands and challenges, Lee, C. M., et al.,(2000).

Social workers group support normalizes the divorce experience and provides support to children who need it, Pedro-Carrol, (2005) as cited in Steven R. (2009).

School-based divorce support groups are one way children can receive support to cope with ongoing stressors associated with growing up in divorced or separated families, Johnson, K. (n.d.). Hawkes et al., (1997) observed that Hadza grandmothers in Tanzania appear to enhance the nutritional welfare of their grandchildren by helping their daughters to obtain food for children. Sear et al., (2000), in rural Gambia maternal grandmothers seem to double the survival chances of a Mandinka child by taking of their grandchildren.

### **Methods of Preventing Divorce in the Community**

The results indicated high level of awareness of divorce preventive methods including prevention or minimization of marital disputes, provision of pre and post marriage counseling, quick amicable settlement of marital disputes, financial support to families in need, conducting public sensitization on divorce impacts, conducting public sensitization on importance of marriage, psychosocial support provision to difficult marriages, banning early and forced marriages, incorporation of key social problems in schools curriculum, enactment and enforcement of strict laws against divorce, discouraging early and forced marriages; and others specify. This is supplemented by there is general agreement that marital therapy can be effective in reducing marital conflict and promoting marital satisfaction, at least in the short term, Bray et al., (1995). Iranians women tried different methods to resolve marital conflicts including, interactive approaches like mutual conversation or counseling, indifference or accommodation, silence, embarrassment, looking for help from neighbors, acquaintances, police, leaving the house; and self-defensive behaviors like beating, avoidance style; and fighting back, Abeya et al., (2012) as cited in Asadi et al., (2016). A repetition of everyday positive interactions and routine involvement in joint activities produces an increase in marital satisfaction and adjustment, Philips et al., (2009) as cited in Kepler, A. (2015). Prayers promote open communication, facilitates couple empathy, increased self-change focus, soften relationship, encouraged couple responsibility for reconciliation and problem solving, Butler et al., (2002) and Greenberg et al., (1998) as cited in Lian T.C. (n.d.). Religious belief and practice helped couples prevent conflicts by assisting them in developing a shared sacred vision and purpose, which in turn reduced marital conflict by decreasing stress levels in marriage and unifying couples, Lian T.C. (n.d.). Children play important roles in stabilizing marriage and resolving marital conflict as the higher the number of children, the more stable the marriage despite the marginal effect decline with the increase of the number of children, younger children reduce the risk of divorce, and couples who have sons are less likely to divorce, Cline et al., (1971). Training couples in communication skills and conflict resolution styles has been successful in increasing satisfaction and decreasing conflict, Askari, M. et al., (2012) & Sharif, F. et al., (2013) as cited in Asadi, Z. S. et al., (2016).

### **Methods of Mitigating the Negative Impacts of Divorce on Children**

Additionally, the findings unearthed methods of mitigating the negative impacts of divorce on the children; divorcees maintaining healthy relationship, ensuring both parents continue to support children, attending regular counseling sessions when needed, avoiding custody disputes, divorcees supporting each other in taking care of the children, custodial parents praising good qualities of nonresident one, civilly handling of marital disputes, assuring children the parents still care, parents continuous involvement in children issues, quick and permanent resolution of marital conflicts, assuring children that the divorce is not their fault, sharing imminent divorce early and gradually; and others specify. This concurs with things to remember when dealing with children of divorced parents, being honest, assuring them it will be fine, let them know it is not their fault, ensuring parents maintain strong relationship by avoiding further conflicts, Chowdary, D. (2017). Social support measures are extremely vital in buffering the effects of marital conflict, Lian T.C. (n.d.).

Children's adjustment is facilitate when nonresident and resident parents are positively involved in their children's lives within the context of cooperative coparental relationship (good divorce) that permits the bonds of kinship with and through their children to continue; pervading the thinking of therapists, family courts, family scholars, and general public, Ahron, (1994) as cited in Amato, P. R. et al., (2011).

Children benefit when there is regular communication between divorcees as it facilitates exchange of information about the children, Lee, C. M. et al., (2000).

Problem-solving intervention for parents are effective in helping them to cope with divorce so too it is with the children as when parents are functioning they too are more likely to do well, Lee, C.M. et al., (1994) as quoted in Lee, C. M., et al.,(2000).

Effective parenting encompassing both warmth and discipline, developing positive parent-child relationship and managing conflict are very critical in protecting divorced children, Pedro-Carroll, J. (2011).

### **Persons to be Involved in Settling Marital Disputes**

Furthermore, the results indicate the people to be involve in resolving marital dispute: community elders, fathers in-law, mothers in-law, immediate neighbors, social workers, elder sisters in-law, elder brothers in-law, psychologists, others specify, lawyers, children; and courts. This is supported by family heads resolve conflict among co-wives, brothers and sisters, truants, street fights and others by scolding the trouble makers and appeasing the offended and even visit them to thank them for accepting a peaceful resolution of the conflict, Ajayi, et al., (2014). While the western world placed emphasis on a judicial system presided over lawyers and judges, traditional Africa uses council of elders, king's court, people assemblies open place, etc. for dispute settlement and justice dispensation, Nwolise, (2005) as cited in Ajayi, et al., (2014). The role of the chiefs, elders, family heads, and others is not only to resolve conflict but also to anticipate and stop or intercept conflict, Osei-Hwedie et al. (n.d.). Dispute resolution in Africa involves families as well as neighbors and the elders, and the basis of settling disputes is reconciliation instead of retribution or punishment, Boniface, A.E. (2012). In Africa, there were levels of conflict resolution- disputes resolutions at the interpersonal or family level, the extended family and village or town level. These tiers represent the political units making up the community, the smallest unit being nuclear family headed by a head, Ajayi, et al., (2014). All-women court's approach is advantageous because peer mediators are able to suggest solutions based on the realities of the women's lives, taking into account the social and cultural context in which they live, Vatuk, S. (2013).

### **Persons with the Overriding Decision in Marital Conflict Settlement**

The results identified people with the overriding decision in marital conflict resolution to include: husbands, fathers in-law, community elders, wives, mothers in-law, elder brothers in-law, children, elder sisters in-law, social workers, members of the compound, psychologists, lawyers; and courts respectively. This is supported by religious practice aid in conflict resolution primarily through spiritual teachings, attendance at religious services, and couple prayer as when they turn to scripture in time of conflict, they often find helpful examples concerning interacting with others, forgiving attitudes, gratitude for divine forgiveness, Lian T.C. (n.d.). Several religious communities strongly discourage divorce, sponsor marriage enrichment programmes, and offer pastoral counseling, McManus, et al., (2003) as cited in Lian T.C. (n.d.).

In conflict prevention, couples often express that their religious involvement has help them to develop conflict deterring virtues like 'think of the needs of others, be more loving and forgiving, treat each other with respect, and resolve conflict, Dudley et al., (1999) as cite in Lian T.C. (n.d.). Conflict resolution is an interdisciplinary field that attracts neutral from backgrounds like human resources, law and social work, Arora, S. (2015).



## **Social Welfare Institutions Roles in Preventing Marital Divorce**

Furthermore, the findings highlight the roles welfare institutions can play in divorce prevention: prevention of forced and early marriage, conducting public sensitization on divorce impacts, provision of pre and post marriage counseling, promote enactment and enforcement of strict laws against divorce, lobby incorporation of key social problems in schools curriculum, provision of psychosocial support to spouse in conflict, provision of financial support to families in need, conducting public sensitization on importance of marriage, promotion of quick marital conflict resolution, promotion of stricter policies; and others specify. This dovetail well with traditional institutions play two important roles: a proactive role to promote social cohesion, peace, harmony, transparency, peaceful co-existence, tolerance, humility, respect; and a reactive role in resolving disputes which have already occurred, Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (2008) as cited in Osei-Hwedie et al., (n.d.). Religious organizations comprise the single largest array of institutions in our culture that have both a great interest in preventing marital breakdown and the capability to deliver premarital and marital intervention for first, most couples got married under their auspices, they know the importance's of such programmes, they already have the necessary structures, and they are deeply embedded in the cultures and are less likely experience cultural resistances and barriers, Hughes R. (2013)..

Supporting a friend in marital problems enhances one's own relationship, and from policy perspective, divorce must be understood as a collective phenomenon that goes far beyond those directly affected, McDemott et al., (n.d.).

Counseling in our present day generation is useful to all persons and at every stage of life and therapists should develop intervention strategies that will help couples to understand themselves, the threat to their union and take decisions that will help them resolve their difference, Tolorunleke, C.A. (2014).

In the States, programs like CODIP that provide group support to reduce sense of isolation, clarifying misconceptions, teaching children how to communicate with parents, problem-solving and other critical skills are important in time of uncertainty and change, Pedro-Carroll, J. et al., (2005) as quoted in Pedro-Carroll, J. (2011).

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

In spite of the fact the current rate of divorce in The Gambia is not well documented, divorce and its associated problems especially on the children is a great concern not only to the government and its development partners but the communities as well. The purpose of this study was to investigate the causes of divorce and its negatives impacts on the children of the divorcees. It was a descriptive survey and purposive sampling technique was used to select the respondents. The survey concentrated on six core areas: level of knowledge of divorce, Level of understanding of divorce, Level of knowledge of the causes of divorce, Level of knowledge of the negative impacts of divorce on the children, Level of knowledge of the support services needed by children of divorcees; and Level of knowledge of the preventive methods of divorce.

Due to limited human, financial resources and time, the study took approximately one year three months. Well-structured questionnaires were used to collect the data from the respondents in four markets. The data was presented and analyzed using tables and percentage. The findings revealed high level of awareness of divorce in the community though no consensus on its causes. It negatively affects all aspects of children developmental needs despite few positive impacts. Government should not only be the principle service provider but the core protector of this vulnerable.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

To eliminate the negative impacts of divorced on the children of divorcees, it is recommended that:

### **Divorcees:**

1. Continue to maintain a healthy relationship and avoid talking bad about each other.
2. Custodial parent ensures frequent interaction between the children, non-custodial parent and his/her family.
3. Non-custodial provides the necessary financial and emotional support to the custodial one for the growth and general welfare of the children, etc.

## Community

1. Continues especially the elders, to support couples to amicably resolve any marital dispute before it results in divorce.
2. Continues to conduct public sensitizations on the causes of divorce and its associated negative effects on children, divorcees and the community.
3. Support divorcees to provide for their children for a better future, etc.

## Government and development partners

1. Continue to conduct and fund public sensitization on divorce and its negative impacts on families and communities.
2. Support families especially those in difficult marital conditions to avoid divorce and its related problems.
3. Conduct and/or support studies related to family matters to better protect this critical social institution.
4. Supports the efforts of NGOs and CSOs that work with families more especially, those in difficult circumstances.
5. Formulate and enforce laws and policies that prevent divorce and adequately support divorcees and their offspring, etc.

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