



Causes and Effects of Parental Separation and/or Divorce: Implications for Children and Adolescents

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Abstract

The current study utilised the case study research design. Parents affected by separation and/or divorce in the mining town of Hwange, Zimbabwe; were considered as the target population. Purposive sampling technique was used in coming up with a sample of 30 participants. The researchers used Interviews in collecting data. The major findings were that there are quite a number of causes of parental separation and/or divorce in the area studied; and most of them had to do with individual and/or societal factors such as unfaithfulness, intolerance, incompatibility, strained relations between spouses and economic challenges. The researchers concluded that parental separation and/or divorce has several devastating effects on children and adolescents; which include psycho-social and emotional problems. The researchers recommend that there be more awareness campaigns on these social mishaps which may make spouses more tolerant to one another; thereby appreciating the detrimental effects their separation or divorce.

Keywords: Family; Marriage; Parental separation; Divorce; Children; Adolescents

Background and Its Setting

Background to the study

The family is ideally considered as the building block of any community or society, and marriage is its essential foundation; hence, any form of its breakdown or break-up affects its members [1]. For them, parental separation or divorce, in as much as they disrupt family stability and order, are often the first major negative change in a child or adolescent's life. These distressing events drastically alter the family's future, bringing a sense of loss particularly to younger children due to disruption in family normal routines including the absence of daily contact with both parents [2]. As noted, parental separation or divorce are rated as some of the most stressful life events for both affected parents and their offspring's; while in some cases, the effects also spill over to the extended family, community and nation at large. Such social mishaps were found to strongly destabilise and influence the quality of family relationships even two decades later [3,4].

Globally, there is a consensus that the presence of a mother and a father in a home, based on mutual relationship and love, are crucial in the upbringing of well-developed and well-adjusted children and adolescents. However, the absence of one of the parents due to either separation or divorce usually poses a major threat to the general welfare of children as well as adolescents particularly with regards their physical, social, intellectual and emotional well-being [5]. Marriage resorts morality, fosters mutual love between spouses, confirms families with divine strength, fosters education and protection of offspring's, restores the dignity of both men and women and establishes the honour and prosperity of families and civil associations in a most excellent and beneficial way. On the other hand, parental separation or divorce begets almost the exact opposite of the above marriage functions and advantages [6]. Parental separation or divorce and its ensuing ramifications can have a significant and life-altering impact on the well-being and subsequent development of children and adolescents. Of late, many



researchers claim that the marriage institution in the recent years has been facing increased cases of irreconcilable differences between husband and wife that have led to increased rates of separation or divorce cases [7]. The Zimbabwe Herald Newspaper (2013) reported that in Zimbabwe, the High Court in Harare received 1 250 divorce applications and the major causes of the breakdown of marriages were attributed to socio-economic challenges including the decay of the extended family system being one of the major causes. In the same vein, the Zimbabwe Sunday Mail Newspaper (2014) notes that financial stress, marital infidelity and domestic violence are also some of the reasons behind the increase in parental separation or divorce in Zimbabwe and possibly many other countries in recent years. Statistics from the Zimbabwe High Court show that the country recorded an average of 96 divorces monthly in 2012, a figure that grew to 105 by 2015 (The Herald Newspaper, 2015). The same source opined and lamented on the increase of cases of separation and divorce that reached alarming rates with couples increasingly filing for separation or divorce at the High Court in Harare. These figures are a cause of concern to communities in general and the Zimbabwean society at large. The problem of parental separation or divorce often has long term consequences for families as they are usually a difficult and painful time for a family, both for the parents and offspring's. Not only are the parents realising new ways of relating to each other, but they are also learning new ways to parent their children in particular ways while at the same time adjusting to the realities of the mishap. Offspring's of separated or divorced parents, young and old, often react to the separation or divorce in different ways; with most often struggling with the transition [8]. Generally, the experience of separation or divorce is often a sad, devastating and painful one though some offspring's; particularly those beyond childhood, are sometimes resilient and with some form of assistance such as counselling, can effectively adjust [9]. Notably, both parental separation and divorce have become a common phenomenon in modern society and often result from a constellation of causes. Sadly, both have effects and implications for the entire members of the family, particularly the offsprings. Thus, it is against this background that the current study was undertaken in the small town of Hwange in Zimbabwe in order to proffer possible recommendations that may lead to the arrest of such social mishaps.

Statement of the problem

Marriage is regarded as an institution that fosters mutual love between spouses and their children. However, due to parental separation or divorce, affected parents and their offsprings must confront a series of life adjustments and challenging changes that consequently modify their lifestyle, behaviour, emotional well-being and their expectation and concept of life. This often leads to

children and adolescents facing psycho-social challenges including emotional and behavioural disorders such as anger, fear and confusion which negatively impact on their self-esteem, social interactions, behaviour and academic performance. Even though some sociological perspective says that parental separation or divorce may be a better option for a troubled marriage the problem at stake is how these social mishaps (parental separation or divorce) affect children and adolescents' development and wellbeing; which is what this study sought to explore in the area under study in order to draw wider implications for society [10].

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to determine the causes and effects of parental separation or divorce as well as their implications for children and adolescents. The study was delimited to the mining town of Hwange in Matabeleland North Province of Zimbabwe. Thus, the thrust of the study was to establish the range of causes and effects of parental separation or divorce in order to illuminate possible solutions to these social phenomenal problems. The findings were also meant to foster possible preventive measures from the Zimbabwean-African perspective.

Research questions

The study was guided by the following specific research questions:

- What are some of the causes of parental separation or divorce in in the area under study?
- What are the psycho-social effects of parental separation or divorce on children and adolescents in the area under study?
- What other problems are associated with parental separation or divorce on children and adolescents in the area under study?
- How can parental separation or divorce be managed in order to protect the general welfare of affected parents, children and adolescents?

Significance of the study

The researchers anticipate that this study would be of benefit to parents, other family members, teachers, social workers, counsellor and other professional support services in making the coping-assimilation process of parental separation or divorce easier for affected children and adolescents as well as the involved parents. It is envisaged that the study will enlighten the community on the pivotal role played by parents living together in the socialization of their children and adolescents while also exposing the negative effects of parental separation or divorce on children, adolescents, other members of the extended family and

the community in general. Furthermore, the findings may shed light on what role communities and central government may play in curbing the parental separation or divorce challenge. Arguably, the findings of this study will also be useful to guidance and counselling personnel on what type of psycho-social and emotional disorders they can expect from a child and adolescent coming from a family that has broken down or up and what assistance may be rendered to the affected children and adolescents as well as the concerned parents in order to help them readjust and live a normal life for the good of their well-being and society at large.

Review of Related Literature

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework for this study comprises of several concepts; namely, family, parental separation, divorce, children and adolescents. A family is a group of people related either by consanguinity (by recognized birth) or affinity (by recognised marriage or other relationship). The purpose of families is to maintain the well-being of its members and of society; ideally offering predictability, structure, and safety as members mature and participate in the community. The same source asserts that in most societies, it is within families that children acquire socialization for life outside the family while the family is also the basic unit for meeting the basic needs of its members. In addition, it provides a sense of boundaries for performing tasks in a safe environment while also building children into functional adults, transmitting culture, and ensures continuity of humankind with precedents of knowledge and social adjustment. Anthropologists generally classify most family organizations as matrifocal (a mother and her children); patrifocal (a father and his children); conjugal (a wife, her husband, and children, also called 'nuclear') or extended (parents and children co-reside with other members of one parent's family. The two concepts of 'parental separation' and 'divorce' are often differentiated by a thin line, yet, the distinction is important in as far as their implications on individuals, society and the nation at large are concerned [11]. Gahler (ibid) further says that the concept of 'separation' in the context of marriage is generally described as temporary marriage breakdown or official provisional parting between husband and wife. Divorce, on the other hand, is the judicial separation of the spouses and complete disruption of their marital relations and obligations. It is the dissolution of marital relations and functions; in this process marriage is completely broken down, either in the social or legal context or both. For divorce is a legal complete break up or end of the marriage and is often the result of a process of marital dysfunction, discord and miscommunication that would have developed for some time in most cases. In most cases, divorce has far more reaching implications than separation as

divorce often implies that there is no more room for the reunion of spouses; hence, implying permanent consequences for the family. 'Children' are generally defined as individuals below the age of 18 years. According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) cited [12]. "A child is any human being under the age of eighteen, unless the age of majority is attained earlier under a state's own domestic legislation". As noted by Erik Erikson's 1959 psychosocial developmental theory childhood is a period largely characterised by the need for protection, love and care as well as high sensitivity and vulnerability [13]. According to the United Nations, at the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children in 2002, State Parties committed themselves in the declaration of 'A World Fit for Children', to building. A world in which all girls and boys can enjoy childhood... in which they are loved, respected and cherished in which their safety and well-being are paramount and in which they can develop in health, peace and dignity". This gives this study a basis for striving to understand how social mishaps such as parental separation and divorce influence children's well-being and general welfare. 'Adolescents' are commonly described as teenagers within the adolescence stage; where 'adolescence' is considered as a dynamically evolving theoretical construct informed through physiologic, psychosocial, temporal and cultural lenses. For, adolescence is a critical developmental period which is conventionally understood as the years between the onset of puberty and pre-adulthood while it is predominantly characterised by the establishment of psycho-social independence [14]. Adolescence is sometimes viewed as a transitional state; during which youths begin to separate themselves from their parents but still lack a clearly defined role in society. It is a period marked by complex changes, such as rapid physical growth, rise of reproductive sexuality, new social roles, and growth in thinking, feelings and morals as well as school transition. It is further characterised by the high need for belonging, identity crisis as well as the fact that every change or event brings with it a new trauma and anxiety, hence, is often described as a stage of 'developmental turmoil' [15].

Review of some of the causes of parental separation or divorce

The following factors as the general causes of parental separation or divorce: poorly performing economy; wrong use of tongues; bad company; unloving spouses; infidelity; impatience; lack of dialogue between spouses; alcohol and fighting; gossip and rumour mongering as well as power tussles between partners [16]. Many studies have shown that parental separation or divorce wreaks havoc among both the young and old couples; further exacerbating partners and offsprings' psychological, social and economic problems. In support of this assertion, in an Australian study revealed that there is a correlation between parental



separation or divorce and children's poor academic achievement, low self-esteem, psychological distress, delinquency, criminal offending and recidivism, substance abuse, moral decadence, depression and suicidal behaviour among adolescents. As parents, the researchers agree with at least one or more of Rodgers' findings; which substantiates the fact that parental separation or divorce is indeed a cause for concern. That in many countries, personal characteristics and socio-cultural factors were attributed to parental separation or divorce in most families and communities [17]. For example, studies in Iran showed that sexual problems especially sexual dysfunction by partners or at least one of them was one of the major causes of separation or divorce [18]. In many submissions, it is also argued that the existence of certain factors in marriages place relationships at a high risk of breakdown or complete parting. Today, many spouses separate or divorce for a multitude of reasons; some of which are beyond their control. The same source opined that personal characteristics and socio-cultural factors such as wrong selection of mate, unmet emotional needs, interference by relatives and friends may cause separation or divorce. Studies on parental separation and divorce in Iran revealed that primary wrong selection of mate was the most important cause of divorce further defined primary wrong selection as not having any idea about each other's characteristics and interests before marriage, which may lead to different behaviour and expectations in couples, thereby consequently leading to separation or divorce. View that unfaithfulness of spouses or one of the partners one of the major causes of divorce in most families the world over. Concur with Tembe's findings by revealing in his findings that infidelity and extramarital affairs by any one of the spouses is the main cause of divorce in the Gulf region and possible many parts of the world [19]. Accentuates that women's feministic-oriented independence and unclear understanding of the notion of equal rights between men and women; early marriages; tough economic environment; poor intellectual, educational and social skills; liberal community and national separation and divorce laws, sexual factors leading to incompatibility, role conflicts, alcoholism and substance abuse, risk-taking behaviours, differences between the partners leading to acrimony, religious differences, attitudes to separation or divorce are some of the factors that cause separation or divorce. Some causes that can lead to separation or divorce are but not limited to; poor social communication between partners especially those with different cultural backgrounds, lack of social support systems (every couple needs support system from family, relatives and friends), unrealistic expectations in life from one of the spouses and partner role conflicts are also reasons for failed marriages; most of which end up in parental separation or divorce. Source <https://www.familymeans.org/causes-effects-of-separation-divorce.html> indicate that many contemporary social science researchers are also in general consensus that

irresponsible social networking, couple addiction to social networking (such as use of Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp), sexual incompatibility, sedentary life style, poor sex drive and dysfunction usually cause stress in relationships and; hence, are also important reasons for destroying marriages. Furthermore, modernisation has also brought with it many social disorders; including long travels to and stay at work, work stress, child rearing conflicts in the absence of a family support structure; many new working partners who are sometimes confused on how to share household and child rearing responsibilities resulting in strain between spouses; more often than not, cause conflicts in marriage and can consequently result in separation or divorce [21].

Review of some of the effects and implications of parental separation or divorce

Research has generally revealed that the psycho-social impact of parental separation or divorce on children and adolescents resides in three main factors, namely, the quality of family relationship, intensity and duration of family conflict, and covering children and adolescents' needs after separation or divorce note that parental separation or divorce may contribute to the development of mood disorders, bipolar disorder, dysthymia (mild chronic depression), anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder [22]. An embittered mental relationship and hostile or rejecting parent-child relationship that often results from parental separation or divorce provides a context that scarcely facilitates intellectual, psychosocial and emotional development in children; hence, may consequently retard it. A variety of negative psychosocial and emotional outcomes are also associated with parental separation or divorce that lead to vulnerability in some children and adolescents; while leading to resiliency in others. When a couple is going through separation or a divorce, the children and adolescents are often the ones most affected; and are, often the ones that are given the least amount of attention and consideration. Children and adolescents can be severely traumatized emotionally by parental separation or divorce, especially if these happenings are nasty, and/or if there is a prolonged or an intense custody battle. Parental separation or divorce often creates emotional turmoil for the entire family, but for kids, the situation can be quite scary, confusing, and frustrating. Cameron (2008) points out that the negative factors in the separated or divorced parents' lives; anger over parental separation or divorce, stress over financial issues and ongoing conflict with the other parent, low levels of education and a lack of emotional support from the social environment; may, at times, overflow onto their children and adolescents' life; whether or not they intend to do it, or are even aware that it is happening. This spill over effect from the separated or divorced parent to the child or adolescent can, in turn, cause anxiety and stress in the child or

adolescent over conflicts that the affected offspring's are not fully able to grasp. Growing up in this sort of emotionally turbulent environment can have a negative emotional effect on the child or adolescent. Arguably, the biggest socio-emotional area that is often affected by parental separation or divorce is the area of self-image and self-esteem. The same source notes that many of challenges associated with socio-emotional life are due to a change in the way that the affected child or adolescent views himself or herself and sometimes how they think others views them. They may believe that they themselves caused the separation or divorce, or that they did something wrong that made mommy and/or daddy want to not be with them or live together. This can cause a child or adolescent to feel sad, depressed, angry, dejected and self-rejecting. In the same vein, aver that upon the separation or divorce of their parents, children and adolescents experience a wide range of emotional reactions, including sadness, anger, loneliness and depression, heightened anxiety, worry, lower life satisfaction and expectation, lower self-esteem and self-confidence, fear, yearning, rejection, conflicting loyalties and a sense of fault for their parents marital problems. Sadly, and often, these challenges frequently last into later phases of children and adolescents lives. That while there is nothing inherently 'wrong' with a single parent family, it is often a fact that a child or adolescent who suddenly goes from having two parents to one parent will almost certainly feel the missing parent's absence acutely, especially if the transition or the actual separation or divorce is abrupt or lacking reason or explanation from one or both parents [23]. A child or adolescent in these circumstances may feel abandoned, unloved, or come to believe that there is something 'wrong with them' or 'one of their parents' that caused the other parent to decide to go for separation or divorce at the expense of marriage and the welfare of children, further notes that a parent's absence can affect a child or adolescent not only through the direct factor of their absence, but through a lack of fiscal support as well. For parental separation or divorce may lead to behaviour problems during childhood into adolescence and sometimes until adulthood. In that regard, violent and assaultive behaviour is an increasingly common referral problem in children and adolescents; and is often seen in conjunction with a recent parental separation or divorce [24]. Studies indicate that parental separation or divorce contributes to an increased risk for a wide facet of undesirable behaviours in affected children and adolescents; including an inability to handle conflict, promiscuity, difficulty in school, increased crime rates, increased drug and alcohol abuse, and even increased rates of suicide [1]. The social behaviour of the child or adolescent gets affected, which results in handicaps in learning how to get along with other people, lack of responsiveness to the advances and behaviour of others as well as lack of co-operation and hostility towards others. Parental separation or divorce is believed, on average, to be a cause of a

wide range of behavioural and emotional problems in children and adolescents. Comparative studies carried out point out that, children and adolescents are likely going to experience little or no problems associated with their well-being where parents live together, whereas, children and adolescents whose parents have broken up are more likely to experience certain challenges including physical health problems, suffer from depression, anxiety and other psycho-affective disorders, present various externalized behaviour problems, be less successful in school, stay in school for a shorter length of time than expected and as well experience more social relations problems [25,26]. In related studies, Cherlin, Chase-Lansdale and McRae reveal that offspring's of separated or divorced parents are more likely to experience poverty, educational failure, early and risky sexual activity, non-marital childbirth, early marriages, cohabitation, marital discord and circular divorce. In fact, emotional problems associated with separation or divorce tend to increase during young adulthood and separation or divorce also has the potential to cause major disruption in the lives of adults and children; and the effects can be long-lasting. In most functioning societies, an intact family helps children and adolescents to develop strong moral character. Lacking such guidance, offsprings of separated or divorced parents are more likely to behave as social deviants. It is sad to note that a number of findings on parental separation or divorce revealed that children and adolescents in separated or divorced families are often in unfortunate and sad circumstances; hence, are more likely to become maladjusted individuals, may commit minor and serious crimes, run away from home for no apparent reasons, be suspended from school, smoke cigarettes, abuse alcohol, carry weapons, engage in physical fighting, use marijuana and cocaine or even commit suicide. Also notes that the following are some of the major effects of parental separation or divorce on children and adolescents:

- Poor performance in schoolwork
- Loss of interest in social activity
- Stress, anxiety and depression
- Emotional instability and insensitivity
- Anger and irritability
- Feelings of guilty and blame
- Adoption of destructive behaviour
- Increase in health problems
- Loss of self-esteem and confidence
- Loss of faith in marriage and the family unit.

As noted, what makes the whole experience of parental separation or divorce even more difficult and sad for children and adolescents is that it often causes increased levels of anxiety and dejection during the process and after the separation and divorce, which can be aggravated by stress emanating from parents failing on their role to keep engaging in effective parenting roles. State

that parental separation or divorce has a great impact on children and adolescents who start by grieving then begin on a journey of feelings involving self-judgement, fear, guilt, anger and blame-shifting. The aftermath of parental separation or divorce, one of the more unfortunate outcomes is that one of the parents may become insignificant or even absent from the child or adolescent's life; which has far reaching ramifications for both affected parents and offspring's unless otherwise corrected by other means [27]. For many children more than adolescents, however, many of the effects of parental separation or divorce are relatively short-lived as many adjust to the new situation reasonably well over time particularly if other social support systems such as the extended family come forward to complement family responsibility.

Research Methodology

The current study adopted a qualitative research methodology which is defined by cite as 'a type of social science research that collects and works with non-numerical data and that seeks to interpret meaning from these data that help us understand social life through the study of targeted populations or cases'. The case study research design; which views as 'a strategy for doing qualitative research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence', was utilised. The case study design was preferred because it allowed for the generation of rich and thick data through eliciting participants' views of their lived experiences of the effects of parental separation or divorce on children and adolescents. In that regard, the researchers ensured that all participants; who were parents, were either direct or indirect victims of parental separation or divorce within the area under study. A case study was also considered because of its important trademarks, including the fact that it is concerned with a rich and vivid description of issues relevant to the case, provides a blended description of phenomena and its analysis, focuses on individual actors or groups and seeks to understand their perceptions while the researcher(s) is or are integrally involved [28-30]. In most cases, a case study method selects a small geographical area or a very limited number of individuals as the subjects of study; which was the case in the current study where a sample of 30 participants (N=30) comprising of parents affected by separation or divorce was drawn from the population based in Number 1 Township in the mining town of Hwange in Zimbabwe. Purposive sampling technique under the non-probability sampling framework was used in coming up with the sample; and was considered ideal on the basis that it accommodated the required participants and also prevented inappropriate elements from being part of the study, which ensured the generation of relevant, reliable and rich data regarding the research problem. The researchers used interviews

in collecting data from the participants. As noted, the major advantages of the interview technique is that the researchers are able to explain further the research questions that the interviewees would not have understood and participants are, therefore, able to elaborate their responses in depth in areas of interest while their body language meant to emphasize certain issues is also easily captured during data generation. Accordingly, the researchers realised these benefits of using interviews in the current study. Consistent with qualitative research studies, the researchers were the primary research media through which research data was generated and interpreted [31,32]. Thus, the researchers were directly involved in the collection, interpretation and reporting of findings after utilising the interviews to collect the data. Findings were then presented using two themes, namely causes and effects of parental separation and divorce, which allowed for the analysis of participants' views by researchers; thereby ensuring the trustworthiness and credibility of the study findings [33,34].

Discussion of Findings

Major causes of parental separation or divorce in Hwange

Participants indicated a number of causes that often lead to parental separation or divorce in the area under study; and the following were noted to be some of the major ones:

- Having a child or children is one of the most treasured things in the African society so when one fails to bear children, she/he may be rejected by family and even the larger community which can lead to separation or divorce;
- When a spouse experiences continuous miscarriage, it may be interpreted and understood to imply that the spouse is most likely a witch who probably wants to use the children who die before birth for rituals. This may lead to separation or divorce;
- The area under study generally believes in African tradition where if a woman gives birth to a child and in a short period, that child dies and the trend continues for three or more times, such a misfortune may strain relationships and force one partner to opt out;
- When a spouse discovers that the other partners' parents or relatives are into witchcraft practices, it may bring fear and panic which may cause separation or divorce;
- A lot of men and women would love to have a partner who performs well in bed in terms of sexual needs satisfaction needs. Needless to say, a partner who performs poorly in bed, makes the other feel short-changed, which may result in separation or divorce;
- Promiscuity and/or infidelity by one of the partners can cause separation or divorce; that's when spouse discovers that his/her partner is not faithful in marriage;

- In some Churches that believe in prophesy, if one spouse is prophesied to be promiscuous, it may strain relationships, leading to separation or divorce;
- Irresponsible use of social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter also causes parental separation or divorce (e.g. having sexual conversations with other people);
- Addiction to gambling when one gambles with property of the family may cause strained relationships that can lead to separation or divorce;
- Domestic violence is yet another cause of parental separation or divorce as it has negative effects on both family relationships and the security of family members;
- Impotence in man can also cause separation or divorce even when the female spouse may think that her partner has been 'locked' by other women;
- Lack of communication between spouses can also cause separation and divorce since it often leads to spouses mistrusting each other or even misrepresenting what the other spouse thinks and does;
- Financial challenges experienced by a family can cause division in a family. In some cases, some spouses engage in extra marital affairs in order to supplement the family income; which if discovered by the other partner, may lead to separation or divorce;
- Gossiping is also very common amongst women in particular though some men also do the same, which can cause cracks in a marriage; further leading to separation or divorce;
- Migration by one of the spouses to other countries, often for greener pastures, has also caused many families to disintegrate forcing spouses to separate or divorce.

The researchers noted that the causes of parental separation or divorce provided were endless in list as they varied from family to family within the area under study.

Effects of parental separation or divorce on children and adolescents in Hwange

Participants also highlighted several effects of parental separation or divorce on children and adolescents in the area under study. The following were noted to be some of the major ones:

- Children and adolescents from separated or divorced families have more behavioural problems and social difficulties including showing signs of withdrawal, forced to lie about their parents' relationship so that they can fit well in the group of their peers;
- Children and adolescents from separated or divorced families are often discriminated against; hence end up feeling totally secluded by peers, the extended family and society;

- The majority of the affected children and adolescences lack guidance either at family or community level; which further exacerbates their involvement in unacceptable behaviour, including early sexual activities, theft and drug abuse;
- Affected children in school end up performing badly in schoolwork because of distraction of concentration and may even be forced to drop from school so as to avoid being humiliated by peers because of coming from a broken family;
- Affected adolescents tend to interpret and react to the separation or divorce of their parents differently; which usually results in the formation of camps; with some adolescents aligning themselves to the father while others align themselves to the mother' camp, which is often determined by whom they sympathise with or believe did not really cause the separation or divorce;
- Children and adolescents from broken families often show mood swings; at one time they are jovial and playing or interacting well with others and at one point they are withdrawn, do not want to play or talk to anyone, which affects their social adjustment;
- Name calling and labelling of the child or adolescent from separated or divorced families by peers and other parents in the neighbourhood also makes the child feel inferior and unacceptable;

Thus, the researchers noted that the above effects of parental separation or divorce on children and adolescents had far reaching implications for their wellbeing and general existence.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings, the researchers concluded that parental separation or divorce is a result of a constellation of causes; most of which have to do with individual and/or societally-related factors such as unfaithfulness, intolerance, incompatibility, strained relations between the spouses, economic challenges and interference from non-family members. On the other hand, the researchers concluded that parental separation and divorce has several devastating effects on children and adolescents. These mostly include psycho-social and emotional problems including negative effects on their personality and self-esteem, stress, anxiety, depression, dejection, general standing in society and trauma which further affects their behaviour, development and life chances.

Based on the findings and conclusions, the study recommends that:

- There be more awareness campaigns on the causes and effects of parental separation and divorce which may make spouses more tolerant to one another and also appreciate the detrimental effects that separation or divorce brings to

children and adolescents within the affected family in particular;

- For the affected children and adolescents as well as parents separated or divorced, counselling services for them should be provided in order to help them to readjust to life and the new expectations of society. This will also help the affected children and adolescents to readjust in life so that they don't feel unaccepted by peers, the wider family and society or completely betrayed by their parents' separation or divorce and even the world. This will also enable the concerned parents to continue playing their parental role to children and adolescents despite their changed circumstances;
- The divorced spouses where the separation or divorce could not be avoided, may be assisted with basic resources where need is considered to be high; and such assistance may come from relatives and government's Social Welfare Department in order to make their life normal or at least to lessen the economic effects of the separation or divorce on them and the affected children and adolescents.

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