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Interpersonal Communication between Divorced Parents and Children in Nigeria

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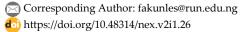
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Abstract

This study examined the interpersonal communication between divorced parents and children. A descriptive and qualitative method was used, and data were elicited through documentation, observations, and interviews with divorced families in Kano, Nigeria. Kano State was selected for this study because Aljazeera revealed it as the state with the most divorce records in Nigeria in 2019, with 683 cases. Data analysis was achieved based on in-depth interviews with the sources and transcription of the interview results. The study found no significant changes brought about by divorce, such that parents still fulfilled their roles of providing love, education, and security for their children. Furthermore, interpersonal relationships within the family were revealed, so there were regular opportunities to communicate freely. Finally, the study contributed to knowledge by showing that interpersonal communication is maintained between divorced parents and their children.

Keywords: Children, Communication, Divorce, Interpersonal communication, Parents.

1|Introduction

Communication is a significant and essential element of social interaction [1]–[3]. It involves people and groups exchanging ideas, sentiments, and information [4]–[6]. The primary goal of communication in human contact is to get the information over to the other person clearly and effectively so that they can comprehend what the communicator or speaker is trying to say [5], [7]. The sender, the recipient, the communication route, and the symbols used to convey the message are all included in the concept of communication [6], [8]. A person, group, or organization sending a message can also be considered the message recipient because they are the ones who receive and process the communication [3].

Good interpersonal communication skills are how one can effectively communicate with others [9]. Divorce is a terrifying epidemic for children worldwide [10], [11]. However, both divorced parents carry out their parental responsibilities as they should. In that case, these children will not feel less because they understand that despite their parents' separation, their relationship with each other endures and never changes [12].

Among the factors that lead to the disintegration of the family is the dysfunction within it [13]. Parents take on new tasks and duties during adolescence in response to their children's evolving requirements [14]. A legally wedded couple can dissolve their marriage through divorce, which ends their marital relationship [15], [16]. In this instance, divorce requires the husband and wife to be legally and judicially separated, which implies the division of assets, obligations, and all child-related rights [17]. Divorce results from differences in perception between the partners or problems that grow old in the marriage and are impossible for both to work through [18], [19].

According to Adult Children Divorce Statistics, incompatibility, differences in values, adultery, financial difficulties, or the absence of rights that should be fulfilled within the home are some of the issues that might lead to divorce. According to the Oxford Learner Dictionary, divorce is the official dissolution of a marriage [19], [20]. Worldwide divorce rates have risen alarmingly (United States, Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, 2012). Without a doubt, divorce rates are rising in Nigeria, but not as quickly as they are in European cultures [20], [21].

While the main incidence of divorce and separation in Nigeria is not well known, earlier research found that the divorce rate in some states was more than that of several European nations [22], [23]. More recently, the 2006 National Population Census statistics showed that 704,000 Nigerians, comprised of 230,000 men and 474,000 women, were divorced [20]. Additionally, the 2018 Nigerian Demographic and Health Survey data showed that women were more likely than males to be divorced or separated, with 3% of women and 1% of men reporting such statuses.

The statistics also showed that 57% of males and 70% of women were married or cohabiting. According to Aljazeera, Kano State had the highest divorce rate in Nigeria in 2019 [24]. Issues that typically aren't supposed to cause problems between couples will blow up and become huge when there is improper communication, unresolved conflict, a lack of endurance and understanding, an inability for couples to study each other, and recklessness in not waiting to find out if the love was genuine before getting married [25]. Due to African women's adoption of feminism and gender equality, civilization has led to a rise in divorce rates [26].

Although the ideas are well-intentioned, many houses have "Bastardized" them. The growth in divorce rates has also been attributed to infidelity and domestic violence [20], [27]. Referring to cases reported in court, the court system has witnessed a notable surge in divorce cases in the previous three years following COVID-19. Unusually and more notably, there has been an increase since 2020. There has undoubtedly been an increase in recent times. Thus, it can be said that the lockdown and the pandemic had an impact, but there has unquestionably been an increase compared to the years before COVID [24].

More people than in the past are willing to exit an abusive or unpleasant marriage than stay in it. The age range of 26 to 40 years old was represented in a large number of divorce cases, and many of the marriages barely lasted two to five years or fifteen to twenty-five years. In Kano City's divorce case presentations, divorce cases have increased to become an important issue. According to Aljazeera, Kano State had the highest divorce rate in Nigeria in 2019. Kano City's divorce rate was 683 in 2019 [24]. Thus, this study aims to comprehend how divorce impacts parent-child interpersonal communication. It is intended to provide a more excellent knowledge of parent-child relationships, including the factors influencing the communication standard within the family.

2 | Method

The methodology used in this kind of study is qualitative. Information for qualitative research is gathered for the data-collecting process via interviews, in-person field observations, and other documentation [28], [29].

In-depth interviews with participants enabled the qualitative descriptive data analysis employed in this study, which bolstered the researcher's assertion that all necessary data had been collected [28]. The next stage is to create a simpler research instrument to compare and enhance the data gathered from interviews and observation [30].

3 | Results and Discussion

In a family dynamic, communication is essential, as seen in the relationship between Ali's family and her ex-husband. Since Samad was still in elementary school, the information that Ali's family had to provide him about the changes in family status could not be wholly understood. When Samad reached maturity, he fully absorbed the facts and realized that his parents' standing had changed. This is because youngsters are actively learning and at a developmental stage. Due to their limited language skills, they still learn language children at that age.

Compared to adults, they have a reduced language comprehension and usage capacity. As such, individuals could find it difficult to understand information or instructions written in complex or foreign languages. In Ali's household, the parent-child interpersonal interaction still exists today, and Halima ensures her child's needs for interpersonal communication are always met. Fundamentally, nothing has changed since Halima and her husband were divorced, as she said. She no longer shares a home with her ex-husband; that is the only difference. Halima continues to devote all of her focus to raising their child. The parents' current separation and their children's living arrangements are the only changes.

Because of the divorce, Ali includes her child in decision-making in her family's case. Halima consistently maintains a convincing bond with her child. After Samad finished his high school coursework, Halima included him in his choices about continuing his university studies. Additionally, Ali's family constantly includes other family members in her interactions with her child so that decisions may be made later on. As Halima's child, Samad decides to adapt to the divorce-related issue psychologically by keeping quiet more about this shift in status.

However, regarding his needs, he tries to look for work that will fit him. He says his parents' different social statuses are not an excuse for failing to provide for him. As Halima's parent, this feeling has never been expressed to him explicitly. On the one hand, Halima has done a good job as a parent by giving her children everything they need regarding love, education, and stability.

Samad claims that the divorce has not affected the interpersonal communication style between parents and children. Because of the divorce, he feels he is always permitted to talk to his parents and be included in their conversations throughout this interpersonal interaction. On the other hand, Samad thinks that to reduce misunderstandings during interactions, there should be an open discussion between parents and children regarding differences in viewpoints resulting from the divorce. In Ali's family, there has been no shift in trust or transparency in interpersonal relationships.

Parents must provide for, raise, and educate their children. They are essential in their children's lives because they give them love, care, direction, and support throughout every growth stage. They play an intricate role in influencing their children's lives as parents. In this sense, Halima always makes room for her kids to talk to each other and stresses the value of being honest with their parents. In Ali's household, communication between parents and their kids has remained strong throughout the divorce. There has been no discernible shift in this regard.

In response to the demands placed on parent-child interactions following the divorce, Halima provides her kid with a comprehensive education and meets all of her physical and emotional requirements. There were communication obstacles between the father and the kid in Ali's home. As Samad approached puberty, he was incessantly suspicious of his parents' relationship. Due to her concern for her child's mental well-being, Halima was unable to respond fully verbally while outlining the reasons for the status change. But, as time passed, Halima said that she saw a significant shift in her child's behavior when he grew up.

This suggests that when Samad was younger, he emotionally absorbed the knowledge of the distinction in his interpersonal communication between his parents' standing as parents and children. This emotional desire concerns aesthetic standards or knowledge Samad gained via emotional experiences regarding the disparity in his parents' position.

4 | Conclusion

The researcher effectively noted in this study that interpersonal communication has reached its maximum potential inside Ali's family. In Ali's family, some elements encourage interpersonal communication, such as the mutual trust Samad is given as her kid. Being Halima's kid, Samad may have confidence in his parents' choices because of their efficient communication. Furthermore, as is a parent's duty, Halima has given Samad love, understanding, and a sense of security in her capacity as his parent. Additionally, the study discovered in the cases studied that mutual understanding might foster positive connections between parents and children.

This study identified the following outcomes: Honesty and openness are the main factors that might improve communication after a divorce. Children should feel free to talk to their parents about their thoughts, worries, and experiences following the divorce. Being truthful is essential for fostering trust and appreciating one another's viewpoints. Parents must try to know their children's circumstances and sentiments. Even when both parents are divorced, this helps parents respond more effectively and provide their kids with the required assistance. It is crucial to uphold the rules, discipline, and values that Halima instills in her child. Children who experience consistency feel stable during all the changes they are going through.

Disclosure statement

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