



Family Politics and Marriage Sustainability in Imo State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This research paper is centered on family politics and marriage sustainability in Imo State, Nigeria. The aim is to show that family politics has negatively affected the sustainability of marriages in Imo State, Nigeria. The objectives are to examine and evaluate the causes of these problems that result to separations and divorces in Imo State. The paper argue that for marriage to be sustained, family interventions and interferences should be avoided and young adults be at liberty to get married to their loved ones. Secondly, that caste system should be totally abolished, no sort of discrimination, among others. The research deploys Konig's theorem, attribution theory and Human Capital Theory in a triangulated form as the theoretical framework to be able to establish the link between family politics and marriage sustainability. It adopts a historical methodology and teased out data from secondary sources. However, the paper recommends, among others, that young adults should be allowed to marry their choice of wife, there should not be any sort of discrimination in the name of Osu Caste system in Igbo land, investigative process should be set aside for love conquers all things, etc.

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INTRODUCTION

Marriage institution has been established by God Almighty from the beginning of his creation of Adam and Eve as He gave the instruction for them to multiply and replenish the earth. Ever since then,

families have been established also, in line with the dictates of the individuals that exist in a society at any particular period of time, from the ancient to the modern civilized society. Within these periods series of different types of families have been establish ranging from communal marriage, group marriage, blood relations marriage, polygamy and lastly monogamy type of marriages. These types of marriages have been experienced with its attendant problems that have caused the termination, separation or divorce in marriages abruptly and makes marriage (many marriages) to be unsustainable. It is established that the major problem causing these unsustainable marriages in so many families particularly in Igbo land with reference to Imo State as a case study has most often be the family politics. The so much integration or involvement of the families in enquiry, investigations and the contribution of the father particularly in contracting marriage for the sons, have given the family members so much power and forces to influence marriages and determining to a large extent, its duration; hence this research. This is so because the problem still appears to be persistent against the backdrop of which the present research is being embarked upon. This has resulted to the problem of sustainability in marriages because a lot of marriages are at the stage of divorce or divorced already, which is on the increase currently. This is worrisome because there is a linkage between family politics and unsustainability in modern marriages, currently.

Moreover inspite of the increase in the rate of statutory marriages both in church and at the registry at the local government council or in the court of law, yet there is no decline, instead a continuous increase in the rate of separation and divorce in Imo State as one of the Igbo States. That is the problem of this study.

Therefore, the research objectives are to examine and evaluate the causes of these problems that culminate to separation and incessant divorce in Imo State. While the aim of this paper is to show that family politics has negatively affected the sustainability of marriages in Imo State, Nigeria. Another challenge is that in Igbo land, marriages are seen to be a family affairs, thereby paving way for family members to intervene and meddle in couple's affairs that suppose to be only for two of them that are involve in the marriage relationship. This is followed by the side effect of the girl child education that has empowered the female folks and turned them to be opponents, as the wife sees herself equal to her husband which breeds negative vibration that is unhealthy for the marriage to last long. To this extent, this research is set to analyze and historically evaluate ancient and modern marriages as to find out whether it is the socio-economic, political or family inclinations that are responsible for the unsustainability of marriages this days in Igbo land with reference to Imo State where, very many of their married daughters end up coming back to their fathers house and remain, or that their educational empowerment which have resulted to most women being financially stable as to be able to take proper care of themselves. Hence, the incessant increase in the rate of divorce that have culminated to the unsustainability of marriages presently in Imo State of Nigeria. This has resulted to the saying that; Ngbotu Owerri Ejile ano nadi; Agboh Mbano anaghi ano otu ebeh; Onye ishi kara nalu Agboh Mbaise; etc. All these do not mean that it is generalized, No, there are some good ones in Owerri, Mbano, Mbaise, etc that are dedicated to their marriage vows and do make a good wife to her husband. Looking at marriages today, questions like; is it the family involvement that lead to increase in divorce rate in Imo State? Does financial empowerment cause women to revolt against their husbands? Has education being a bane on marriage sustainability? And other related questions do arise. The major significance of this research is that it will clear the doubts and glaringly show case the nity grities of both ancient and present day modern marriages and what have been the constraints, problems and the causes of its unsustainable state in Imo State, Nigeria.

CONCEPTS:

FAMILY: A family constitute a husband, wife and a child or children and it is the most unique unit of a society as well as the foundational very beginning of a community. Family is representing people with common ancestor that are bloodly related known by a unique name that distinguished them from others (Nwogugu, 2006). A family is a nucleus part of any group of houses that transform into a kindred and later metamorphous into a village that a collective of villages form a community. That in the same vein, equally, multiplication of communities form a clan or kingdom. Families play a vital role in a society because the family stand as the roots of the larger society and as such can be described as the microcosmic parts of the macrocosm of any political entity. Hence, we have family politics which is the bedrock, the foundational and first socialization point that determines the character of its members and by extension, the character of the society. Therefore, the way and manner a marriage is contracted goes a long way to affect the development and sustainability of such marriage. A family “is a social institution based on kinship that functions to replace members of society and to nurture them” (Sullivan, 2003:74).

However, family is seen as secret, sacred and moral institution that is not a mere one but, an ideology incline to uprightness and positivity. It is a backstage environment where members relax, feel free and interact liberally more than they can publically. Equally, it is seen as a symbolic stage of mixture of both adults and children, harmoniously living together with much care for one another (Eitzen and Zinn, 1997). Interestingly, marriage has been politicized to the extent that it is contextable on what constitute normal union. It is glaring that consideration of marriage can be political, and it has depreciated the rate of marriage, increased divorce rate and non-marital cohabitation, as well as possibilities for gay and lesbian marriages as their political rights (Pinsof and Lebow, 2005).

POLITICS: The word politics originated from a Greek word “Polis” which means city-state that is much more advanced and supreme more that any other cluster. Politics is concerned with the mode of production, distribution or allocation of resources, needs and wants authoritatively to maintain equitable balance if possible. Hence, the struggle to avert deprivation and exclusion in any political entity. The term politics can actually be misconstrued in some circumstances such as when dubious people are fraudulently playing pranks or trying to be deceitful on their fellow individual; in this regard, Easton defined politics as “the authoritative allocation of values for a society” (Ikelegbe, 2005:4). Politics is the contextual involvement of the masses for the benefit of the very few elected, that will determine the faith of the people in the state. Politics equally can be seen as any process or act of decision-making and conflict resolution in the family, church, and any social organization, hence, politics is said to be ubiquitous. Politics is not based on sentiments or emotions rather the cardinal crux of it is centered on interest, benefits, and futuristic hope of succession of an individual or group of individuals in a political party between the opposing parties. With regards to interest and benefits, in family politics both parents struggle to influence the children by taking sides on matters based on their various interests that are different just to be incharge and exert influence based on their own line of thought that defines their interest on both their children and other family relatives. In that manner, they determine the school you go to, the church to attend, the person to marry and all those stuffs. Family politics subjected the women to the extent that they feel that they are in the dark cave or the prison of the social world just as plato talked about “the allegory of the cave recounted by plato in the republic” (Latour, 2004:10). Politics of nature illuminates that “politics does not fall neatly on one side of a divide and nature on the other. From the time the term politics was invented, every type of politics has been defined by its relation to nature, whose every feature, property and function depends on the polemical will to limit, reform, establish, short – circuit, or enlighten public life” (Latour, 2004:1).

MARRIAGE: Marriage is a contract entered in any society by two matured adult of over twenty one (21 yrs) years of age (majority age) who have agreed mutually to be and live together as a couple for private consummation of conjugal consumption and specific performance of their marriage responsibilities after performing and completing all the rights under the law for both traditional and legal rights of marriage ceremonies, purporting to harmoniously live together and performing the duties of marriage until death do them part. It can be contracted in Nigeria most times only on traditional ways, implying that traditional rights performance and traditional marriage ceremonies automatically entitle the adult male and female to be declared husband and wife by the both parents and the community members their present. While some will extend the marriage ceremonies to be under the Act, which covers the legally registered marriage. Hence, in Nigeria there exist the customary marriages and marriages under the Act – which is lawful marriages. However, marriage is a private social, economic, political and legal decision of coming together of two individuals for exclusive consummation of conjugal consumption and reproduction of children in some cases that are inseparable, indivisible, and binding on the two involved until absolutely or irreparably dissolved by a court of competent jurisdiction or death do them part. This is so because the families involved do put into consideration the various spheres of life and the benefits accruable from the marriage linkages before accepting the onward contract or contradicting to the extent of objecting negatively on any of such marriages without the benefits on social, economic, political and legal aspects. This poses a whole lot of politicking in the families whenever their son or daughter is entangled with the opposite sex and later decided to take it further to the level of marriage. There and then the questions of who is the father? Where is he/she from? What does he/she do for a living? Is he/she a graduate? How does he/she looks like? etc. Any defect in all these questions plays a vital role in the sustainability of the marriage or the reackage of the marriage with time, based on the dislike and none supportive moves from time to time exhibited by both family members and the further interpretation and understanding that keep on erupting until it will bust like a volcanic eruption, resulting to a breakdown in some marriages. In the pre-industrial stage of world development, “marriage was a union of families. It was about economic considerations, such as control of the land and inheritance and as such needed to be strictly controlled” (Sernau, 2006:78). However, in this industrial world stage that most women are working class, financial independence has enhanced the rate of divorce, as it is known that “if women were more financially independent, I think the divorce rate would probably be doubled what it is” (Sernau, 2006:81). Moreover, it is worthy to note that “the wedding ceremony in itself is not the act that really unites a couple in holy matrimony in the eyes of God; it merely grants them the public license to retreat privately to some romantic spot and experience the one flesh relationship that truly unites them as husband and wife – implying that – marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure” (Tim and Lallaye, 1976:18).

SUSTAINABILITY: The concept of sustainability explores the relationship between economic development, environmental quality and social equality. This concept has been evolving since 1972, when the international community first explored the connection between quality of life and environmental quality at the United Nations (UN) conference on the human environment in Stockholm. Moreover, sustainability has been not until 1987 when the concept “sustainable development” was defined as development in continuum that takes care of generations without depreciation in its ability (Achinulo, 2017). Sustainability should be viewed as that capacity, enablement and power to keep a recognizable standard at a particular level for a very long period of time in continuum. The maintenance of anything at a stable rate continuously is what sustainability is all about until circumstance or problem disrupt it or put it to a halt. Given that human being is involved here, representing one of the four pillars of sustainability, it then implies that family politics has the capacity to protect, preserve or reck down a

married couple to the breaking point of separation or outright divorce; which will result to unsustainable marriage. Sustainability is considered all encompassing, because it affects all sectors or spheres of life, hence, countries consideration for it and involvement of decision-makers, national planners and all other levels of government, becomes inevitable in their planning policy so as not to deny the upcoming generations the very best of the present generation in any way (Blowers, 1997).

Moreover, sustainability is more encompassing, that was why crane and matten assert that “The concept of sustainability can be broadened to include economic and social as well as environmental concerns. They argue that it is sometimes impossible to address the sustainability of the natural environment without considering the social and economic aspects of relevant communities and their activities. In order for a business corporation to be sustainable, that is, to be successful over a long period of time, it must satisfy all of its economic, legal ethical, and discretionary responsibilities” (Wheelen and Hunger, 2010:75). In relating these to marriage sustainability, these factors economic, social, legal, ethical and discretions do affect marriages either ways and to a very large extent determines its duration. Again, family politics swims around these factors as well, forming a considerable determinant on whether to contract the marriage or not to go ahead. In addition, determining the sustainability of an advantage, there are basic determinant factors which are durability and imitability. In terms of durability, competency reduction can cause unsustainable advantage depending on the degree of depreciation which could equally result to irrelevancy. While imitability can culminate to learning and imitating other characters or skilled capacities which can easily be replicated; resulting to unsustainable advantage (Wheelen and Hunger, 2010). Both the durability and imitability factors in relation to marriage institution can affect marriage sustainability either way – it can enhance the sustainability or mar it respectively.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

Konig’s Theorem in other word’s marriage theory is propounded by D. Konig in 1916 that is concerned with the relationship between men and women that results to marrying the particular person you know (Bothamley, 1993). Signifying that marriage should be personal choice and decision without interferences.

Attribution Theory was proposed by F. Heider 1896 which is concerned about social perception of an individual on others and vis-visa based on their various features exhibited in a relationship. It has to do with observing one another in their numerous activities and conducts to decerne on the information attributed on them to adjudge them of their intentions and motivational disposition which is used to evaluate their behaviours (Bothamley, 1993). This stands as the evaluate process of making a choice of partner.

Human Capital Theory: This is an economical inclined theory by British economists Sir Williams Petty (1623 – 87) and Adam Smith (1723 – 90), alongside with Gary Becker (1930) and Theodore Schultz (1902) who expanded the theory to a more broader version. It states that the cost of education and other trainings are quite expensive and should be seen as an investment for a better future because it guarantees better remunerations of individuals who have upgraded themselves in that regard. The theory makes the understanding of the variants in incomes and wages easily better understood. In the same vein, people, notable scholars have considered and argue that training makes the difference very glaring and not endowed ability, philosophers such as John Locke (1632 – 1704), John Stuart Mill (1806 – 73), and Karl Marx (1818 – 83). Human capital is seen to be the ability to communicate in writing, read letters, alphabets and symbols as well as acquired skills that can be applied in production processes (Bothamley, 1993). Again, human capital enables an individual to know his/her fundamental human rights to a very large extent, because fundamental human rights is “concerned with the rights

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and liberties of individuals and group within a free society. F.H.R. are the basic socioeconomic, political and moral principles of just and fair treatment of the individual person or groups, generally arrived at by experience, common sense and some consensus and confirmable either by municipal law and/or international treaties and convention all of which are influenced by the stage of human development, diverse interests and ideologies” (Igwe, 2002:165).

Furthermore, from the above explanation it is so glaring that these three theories triangulatively are adequate to be used in the analysis of this topical research on the family politics and marriage sustainability in Imo State, because all these inclined features and characteristics propounded by these theories ensures justice that can make marriage sustainable despite and inspite of the politics however intensified it could be in the family.

METHODOLOGY

The research method adopted in this study is historical method of data collection which is conceptualized as an alternative to the rudimentary interview method of sourcing for data, in other words the primary method of collecting data from interviewees. Rather, information from written documents and other relevant historical materials are used as a secondary method of data collection (Vago, 2006). The secondary method applied to the study was to establish the relationship between the two variables. For compatibility purpose, the research is qualitative, that is the reason why data was sourced out from published academic materials such as textbooks, journals and some other literatures in line with the subject matter. Inferences were drawn from the conceptual and Historical analysis made from which the researcher arrived at a conclusion.

IBO TRADITIONAL POLITICAL SYSTEM:

The Igbos are the third major ethnic group in Nigeria that are much more industrious and enterprising in almost all spheres of life. They are so determined, dedicated, focused and have the capacity to endure long suffering so long as at the end, there will be hope to achieve their set goals. As enterprising as they are in their territory and beyond, so they are educationally inclined to the point that they appear to be the most educated ethnic group in Nigeria. There are a lot of knowledgeable, wise and wealthy men that are prone to challenge themselves in so many matters arising in their society. This situations and circumstances made it uneasy for any group to have their way without being challenged by an opposition, and factional group in the community. This resulted to the complexity of their system. The Igbo traditional system does not have a single headed central authority that commands influential power as it were in the Hausa – Fulani and Yoruba ancient kingdom, representing the other two major ethnic nationalities that form the tripod of Nigeria. Rather all authoritative powers lie on the people who concenciously take decisions in unanimity.

However, there are different categories of powerful groups that do get involve in the day to day running in the kingdom and the villages which traditionally are entitled to function as custodians of tradition and have the authorities to act, as to maintain peace and orderliness in the society. These set of people comprises the Elders Council, the Age-grade, the Ozo titled holders, the Ofo titled holders and the diviners/chief priest (Alapiki, 2010). Again, as an acephalous community of people without a centralized political body that superintend and rule over the people, these aforementioned set of bodies or groups were vested with the power to make laws, adjudicate justice and punishment, implement policy decisions reached, etc were then in control of the kingdom with a king, rather, it was better called Ibo society, territorial communities or kindred system tagged “Umunna” that operates in a democratic pattern made up of patrilineal family group system (Alapiki, 2010).

Furthermore, there existed fundamental institutions equally comprising the council of Elders known and addressed as “Ama-ala” which are group of family heads from various lineages in the community who are the Ofo holders indicating authoritative symbol of their ancestors. Over and above any other, is their overall high Ofo holder who stand as their king known and addressed as the Igwe. The Igwe heads the council that deliberate on various matters such as; landed property disputes that is crisis prone, murder cases, robbery, traditional rituals, traditional festivals and other cultural fundamentals. Another fundamental institution is responsible for the society’s administration known and addressed as Ohaneze that is made up of the adult male that has found a better footing in terms of fending for himself as to be able to contribute financially to the development of the entire community. Interestingly, there are reserved positions meant for their illustrious sons who have excelled in their works of life and contributed immensely to the development of their community. Such individuals are conferred with the “Ozo” title as a mark of honour and recognition to them (Alapiki, 2010).

In addition, there existed the Age-grade group system that were responsible for the executions of most of the decisions made by the Igwe and his council members for the good of their community. These Age-grades were incharge of security and maintenance of law and order in their various Igbo communities and against exogenous attacks that might come. Also, immorality and good conduct are being regulated by the customs and traditions of the Igbos in collaboration with the activities of their juju priest who were the mouth piece of the gods of their land. The wrath of their deity pronounced by their juju priest goes a long way to curtail the evil that people indulged-in, within the communities (Alapiki, 2010).

More importantly, the Igbo traditional political authority gave some degree of power to the female folks that are part of their community. This ranged from the married women into their communities as their men’s wives. Equally, gave their daughters that are married out some degree of power officially to delve into some family matters in course of marriages and burials of anyone of their own. Notably, it is the Umunna that will itemize the traditional rights of the men folks in both occasions of marriage and funeral, which failure to do it will all attract sanctions. In like manner, their women folks have their own entitlements, which failure to accomplish all, equally attracts penalties as the case may be, in accordance with the provisions of their community bye-laws or constitution of that particular community. Socially and economically, there existed and still in existence, regulations of social interactions that appear to be inhuman relatively in line with caste system which is a man-made thing that ought to have fizzle away as civilization has engulfed the killing of twins. The Igbo traditional system imposed a restriction on any social interaction that might result to contracting marriages between the so called “Osu” and the “Diala” social classes. However, “the Osu are descendants of Igbos who worked in the public sanctuaries and shrines of the Igbos in Ome na ana. Ome na ana is the name of the Igbo culture, and the religion is also called “Ome na ana” (Ilona, 2017:1). Again, “that many Igbo who bear the names Nwa-osu, Osu-agwu, Osu-chukwu, Osu-nkwo, Osu-eke, etc, are not of Osu ancestry. In trying to use name or words analysis to unravel the origin of the Osu, it is the name for the assistants of the priests among the Nsukka people of the Igbo people; Oru-ma or Ohu-ma that gave us more light about the origins of the Osu and who and what they actually were. Oru or Ohu is the Igbo word for slave, and ma in Nsukka dialect of Igbo is spirit. So this means, that Ohuma means slave of spirit” (Ilona, 2017:6). This group of people in Igbo land are seen as outcast, more especially in Imo State; which is a misrepresentation of personality and identity as far as studies have shown. There are some areas of painful discrimination between the Osu descendants and the Dialas who are termed free-born; the most painful area is the area of marriage.

In Igbo land and most precisely, the children of an Osu man is rightly expected to marry their fellow Osu persons and if on the contrary venture to get married to the Diala who is seen as a free-born, there

is bound to be a huge problem. This is so because there is this fallacy that if a free-born marry's an Osu person, automatically the Osu personality or whatever about the Osu is transferred to the free born to become an Osu. This situation has made it very difficult for inter-marriage between the two classes to easily be contracted, even, inspite of the fact that there are anti-segregation laws by various states in Igbo land to abolish the Osu practices, it is still a basic factor that have reeked so many lovers in their marriages. It takes only strong persistence and patience to surmount and win the family politics against the Osus by the Dialas (Ilona, 2017).

Furthermore, there are some taboos that can be seen, equally as abomination by families, such as a sexual intercourse between the Osu and the free born – Diala, can cause the diala so much denial of his/her privileges or even turned him/her to become an Osu but the Osu cannot be turned to a diala by this same act. Let alone marriage that is seen as the worst, not tolerated by the dialas because they believe that it is a big taboo that brings doom to a would be successful union. There is not excuse even if the marriage was contracted out of ignorance, the family believes that it will bring a strong stigma hence; they do conduct a thorough investigations to avoid making such a mistake, because in Igbo tradition, marriage is a family affairs (Lemchi, 2011).

Interestingly, it has been a compulsory thing to do in Igbo land prior to announcing a girl, lady or woman your wife, which is payment of dowry. The groom must ensure that he pays the dowry of the female folk he intended to marry so that he can have right of ownership as she becomes his private property-kind-of devoured of any male or female encumbrances in the cause of their married life. The dowry is a cash payment seen in Law as a consideration to the parents of the bride as to earn the customary and traditional right to take her as his wife. Whereas on the contrary, “in Igbo and Hebrew cultures, when a man divorces his wife and sends her away, the woman shall go without cost to her. Conversely, when a woman renounces the union, she has to repay the dowry or bride price. Before a divorcee remarries, she must have repaid the dowry, otherwise issues begotten by her belonged to the first husband. The later husband would be regarded as a mere lover, swimming in concubinage” (Ekeimo, 2015:70).

Although, presently education has given a very clear understanding to the issue of Osu as to be totally ignored by any rational and critical thinking human being in Igbo land, particularly in Imo State, because it was a man-made and not the classification done by God Almighty which is mostly or predominantly observed in Imo State of Nigeria. On the economic view, the Igbo traditional system has the four market days (the Eke, Ori, Afor and Nkwo) by which traders, market women and even children are involved in the activities that go on to promote the economic status of the traders.

However, the Eke market days are seen as a very remarkable and significant evil days to contract marriages and for one to die. Any marriage contracted on Eke day is seen to be a taboo as well as one dying on Eke day, that person is tagged evil man or that the gods were responsible for the person's death, perhaps because he/she was a very bad man or woman or that the gods were not happy with the fellow. Therefore, in marriages, family members both sides in Igbo land, particularly Imo State will cross-check carefully before fixing their children's marriage date and day to avert the sacrilegious taboo that follows afterwards. More also, taxes are been paid from time to time, levied on the eligible men and women for the development of their communities, sometimes, both the men and the women indulge in capital projects, that project the image of the community and promote a quality life of their people.

Lastly, Igbo traditional marriages are seen to be a form of alliance between the man's community and the woman's community and to that extent, can form a formidable cooperative relations that can dissolve crisis, prohibit declaration of wars and stands as a second home to the offspring of the contracted marriages. These situations creates socio-political interactions that are very cordial between

villages, communities, towns, and even present day states in Igbo land and precisely Imo State of Nigeria. In Igbo marriages, couples do claim right of ownership as in property terms where a husband claims that the wife he married is his property, while the wife wants him – the husband – all to herself as her own because she has right of ownership. Philosophically, the man appears to be right because, he has applied his labour to acquire her as a private wife by performing certain rights with his hard earned money which he sweated for as well as paying money to her parents as her dowry or bride price which entitles him to own her as the wife and by extension his property. In this regard, Hodgskin (1966) conceptualize property as “man’s right to the free use of his mind and limbs, and to appropriate whatever he creates by his own labour” (MacGregor, 1996:145).

FAMILY POLITICS AND MARRIAGE CONTRACT

Marriage is done for some reasons in different cultures but majorly for basic reasons such as; providing stable environment for the offspring of the couple, for the reason of being considered spiritually complete, motivates young men to engage in marriage, for harmonious relationship to ensure continuation of reality of life. It is equally a means of gaining status in both social and economic status because of the joint resources; these make the couple wealthy and powerful in most cases. He went on to argue that marriage, being the interaction and interdependent of the both families, there exist love marriages and earlier practiced arranged marriages for economic reasons basically. And that marriages are different in nature, this range from monogamy, polygamy, polyandry, group marriage, etc (Gardiner and Kosmitzki, 2005). In Imo State precisely, marriage is a linkage and forms a formidable family network that stand as a solidified pillar of unification of two families and by extension, two communities. For this reason, it is a very serious matter and that was the reason why in the early Igbo tradition and culture, a father is responsible for the first son’s marriage and even for all, for a wealthy father. It became a family grounded and formidable politics because the father was meant to dictate who his son marry’s, due to the fact that he was to take responsibilities. As the saying goes, “if a man makes a mistake in giving his daughter in marriage, he reincarnates into a wrong family; he who pays the piper dictates the tune” (Osuji, 2009:8). Realizing that marriage is not a one man show in Igbo land and particularly in Imo State rather, it is a family affairs, therefore, there is bound to be family politics boardening on issues such as who to marry, where to marry from and other investigations on both families statuses, ranging from economic status to health status and of course whether the person is an Osu, Ume or whether they are known for early death, barrenness, or any taboo associated with the families involved. In addition to the above, the character of both would be couple and what they do for a living, more espically on the side of the groom to be. As well as who is their parents and what do they do, how is their character, how many children, wife, etc. In this regards, family members do anchor on any of above mentioned factors to display their dynamics in determining what goes on or happen, when and how it happens in any marriage intended contract or already contracted ones based on their different perception on either the man or the woman.

However, before we delve into the different stages of politicking in families concerning marriages in Imo State, lets briefly look at the marriage tradition and culture in Igbo land. It was sacrosanct that fathers were financially responsible for their sons marriages, that was why strictly then, brides were handed over to the grooms fathers. However, the resolution of problems were done between the two parents and by extension, the two families. More also, after contracting the marriage, father inlaws do give their daughters inlaw landed property for cultivation of garden or farm plantations. Again, the bride lives with her mother in law after marriage for like six months for marriage tutelage, though be consummating marriage with her husband. She will later start to stay alone with her significant other or most significant – best for her – together with a related younger sister. But before all this state in a family, there are different stages involved starting from investigation, approval, inquiry that starts with

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wine (mmanya ajuju), presentation of wine and quest to possibly marry the girl; will be asked but the would be bride's father will excuse himself by replying that he will ask his daughter, investigation on the would be groom by the bride to be's father, at the satisfaction of both parents – the marriage proceeds, preliminary three different days wine carriage prior to the maiden visit, this visit is for certification purposes by the girl in affirmation of the gotten information about the young man – her fiancé, at acceptance after this stage, then the grooms family will progress by completing the wine carriage – (Ibuzu mmanya), followed by a four day marriage visit (Ije di abali asato), then the bride price or dowry payment (Ihu onu nwanyi na ikwu ugwo nwanyi) and lastly, will be the public celebration of marriage (Ihenrisa or Igbankwu nwanyi) which marks the end of the marriage processes and stages of the ancient era. Contemporarily, there is a modernized pattern these days that made it possible for swift approach that facilitates traditional and cultural marriage in Imo State and some other parts of Igbo Land easier by agreeing investigating in a couple of weeks and parents consent sorted for, excluding financial responsibilities. Even, some do get married before introducing the wife to the parents and family members mostly if the wife is from a different country or continent. That is what modernization has brought into the culture of the Igbos generally (Osuji, 2009).

Interestingly, the family is the most important unit that evolves from the very first beginning resulting from marriage which is the oldest institution that no one appear not to have graduated from it until death. However, there are different types and forms of family/ies ranging from the ancient existed families to the modern type of family formation. “The family [says Morgan] represents an active principle. It is never stationary, but advances from a lower or to a higher condition ... systems of Consanguinity, on the contrary, are passive, recording the progress made by the family at long intervals apart, and only changing radically when the family has radically changed” (Engels, 1978:33). It is on record that the consanguine family was the very first stage of the family, where marriage groups are deciphered in accordance to the generations. In this family setting, grandfathers, and grandmothers within a particular family are seen and regarded as husbands and wives of each other as well as their children in conjunction with their fathers and mothers. A new generation of children in that family are equally seen and regarded as a new sets of common husbands and wives. It goes on and on as a circle of common husbands and wives from one generation to the others. To this extent, brothers and sisters, cousins of different degrees are all husbands and wives of each other and do have sexual intercourse with one another (Engels, 1978).

Furthermore, the consanguine family was followed by the punaluan family where there was exclusion of sister and brother from having sexual intercourse, which implies children of the same mother as a general rule, although exceptions were discovered in Hawaii. Also there was restriction of marriage contract involving collateral relations such as first, second and third cousins (Engels, 1978). Whereas the third evolved family system was the pairing family whereby male and female folks were involved in group kind of pairing that practice unregulated community wives in a group marriage that culminated to unbridled adultery. This system of family prohibited marriages between relatives as was exemplified in India and Iroquois (Engels, 1978). However, it took women to institute monogamous marriages, which according to Bachofen was a transition from hetaerism or sumpfzeugung to monogamy due to advancement in economic conditions and the increase in population. The women felt being humiliated and deserve the right of chastity and everlasting marriage with only one man. It was then different from pairing pattern of marriage, only that as a basic rule, it was only the man who can decide to end the marriage or repudiate his wife. Implying that only the man can dissolve the marriage and the conjugal right of infidelity remains with the man also as long as he will not allow his concubine have access to his house in accordance with the code of Napoleon. And anything contrary exhibited by the wife, she will receive punitive punishment as was practiced in Greece (Engels, 1978). It's worthy to note that

“the first division of labour is that between man and woman for the propagation of children – and presently – the first class antagonism that appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamous marriage, and the first class oppression coincides with that of the female sex by the male” (Engels, 1978:75). Monogamous marriage has been a huge problem in Nigeria generally and in Imo State in particular, causing so many marriages to separate at the slightest mistake of the husband man on another female folk while in marriage with another woman. Civilization, modernity and Christian religion have contributed immensely to the increase in the rate of divorce with reason of infidelity or polygamous attempt by already married man. That is why “as the monogamian family has improved greatly since the commencement of civilization, and very sensibly in modern times, it is at least supposable that it is capable of still further improvement until the equality of the sexes is attained” (Engels, 1978:97).

It is important to note that it is the politics in the family that changes society from one period to another because family setting and stages is a man made thing which can only be done by influential men and sometimes women that tend to protect their area of interest. In other words, there is always struggle for hegemony by the female folks. And to a very large extent those series of family politics determines the duration of most contracted marriages in societies. This family politics has even gotten outside the box where women have realized that there is need for them to get involved in the political governance of the state which has equally resulted to separation in some marriages. Mostly in Igbo land, where women are seen to be meant for only child rearing, caring and nurturing of both the husband and other members of the family. Many of the female folks have been influential in politics hence, “the increase in the numbers of female politicians has had an impact not just on the debates and questions raised, but to some extent, also on the ways in which politics is conducted” (Craske, 1999:206). It is equally understandable that marriage is centered on consummation of conjugal consumption, which makes sexual politics a crucial one in families because “sexuality is much more central to social and political problems and that unless a sexual revolution is incorporated into political revolution, there will be no real transformation of social relations” (Mohanty, Russo and Torres, 1991:237).

Lastly, it is quite clear from the above that the family politics that goes on in families in Imo State and the general Igbo land have the capacity to reck marriages, deny some people opportunity to get married, and even disrupt an established marriage up to the point of separation or outright divorce. All these they do through their interventive critical questions that has to do with the person in question, where he/she come from, their family status, which comprise, economical, health, caste, whether they are prone to untimely death, barrenness, taboos associated to the family if any, like madness, robbery or stealing, the character of the people, kind of job/work the person is involved in, who the father is – dead or alive, what he does for a living, character of the parents specially, the number of children the parents have and number of wife, etc. family relations are usually meant to investigate the both families and give confident report as feedback which they can seize the opportunity to tell blatant lies just to abort the intention and mission.

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

Marriage is the first institution established by God which civilization has created differentials that distinguish one from another. There is civil marriage which the marriage ordinance prescribes certification of such marriage at the local government council or any certified church by law empowered to contract marriage between two opposite sex alongside witnesses to authenticate the contract after they (couple) must have gotten their parental approval. While customary marriage is the form of marriage which the two families involved, traditionally performs all the right of passage or rituals in it and finalize it with payment of dowry or bride price to the bride parents which varies

according to the nuances in tradition and culture. Whereas spiritual marriage has to do with the confirmation of the marriage in the house of God with exchange of vows and receiver of blessings from both the Priests and the entire congregation (Heward-Mills, 2013). However, we have in other words monogamous marriage which is just as it is practiced in the Western developed world which “Lord Penzance described in *Hyde V. Hyde* as “The voluntary union for life of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others” (Nwogugu, 2006:xxx). While polygamous marriage is viewed as a union of one man with two or more wives that he contracted, because he has the capacity and the opulence to care for them for a possible life time. In addition to this, is child marriages that involve a minor below the majority age without her knowledge nor permission, which is a necessary condition prior to the progress in the marriage process. Moreover, polygamy is recognized in Nigeria by a customary – law institution with three basic characteristics which are unwritten, based on a certain acceptable age bracket where applicable and dynamism in the rules over time (Nwogugu, 2006). In this regard, some marriages are valid and voidable while some are invalid marriages by one reason or the other according to tradition and culture, as well as the law as provided in the matrimonial causes Act and Marriage Act in Nigeria. Again, there are major or basic essential elements or factors that validates marriage which include age, prohibited degrees of consanguinity and affinity, there must be dissolution of an existing marriages under the customary – law marriage before contracting a valid statutory marriage with a woman or wife, consent of the parties, parental consent and neither of the interested party must be already married (Nwogugu, 2006).

Interestingly, God Almighty instituted marriage when God felt that man was alone for he said “it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him” (Genesis 2:18). God went on, after creating the helper from Adam’s rib, to say that “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). This paper is of the opinion that the one flesh is the offspring or child/children that cannot be separated ever in parts and that the couples are two distinctive individuals prone to separate at any given time as the case may be. Moreover, in marriage and everyday life, love is the way to achieve happiness and joy because love is patient and kind, love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all the right. Love bears all the things, believes all things, love never ends (1John 4:7).

God Almighty created man and instituted marriage for certain reasons which include challenges of man’s loneliness, even though he was not alone because he was with other creation of God that he named them as he was instructed by God to do, secondly, marriage was instituted for man to have a help meet, someone to share burdens with at all times through praying together, having sexual satisfaction, reasoning together, planning together and executing in harmony, providing comfort for each other and assisting in socio-economic aspects as well as in the family setting generally; thirdly, it was meant to avert any sexual immorality because to fornicate is sin against God, again, marriage was instituted for the purpose of having children for God wanted man to multiply and replenish the earth with their children who will have dominion over other creations on earth. Although marriage can still be authentic without children (Heward – Mills, 2013).

On the other hand, individuals contract marriage happily and later in life for one reason or the other divorce and go their separate ways. Divorce is more pronounced in this modern ways of family co-existence than it was during the traditional era in Igbo land and Nigeria generally, because they practice polygamous marriages and the traditions and culture of the Igbos condoned such as their customary practices. In the same vein, the Hunter – gatherers of the ancient epoch do contract marriage for love and lust and end up keeping a nuclear family which their relatives do assist them. Although, sometimes they divorce and marry another in replacement when there is need for that. While that of Kalahari Kung

people, do have incessant threats of divorce more often than not, caused by unhappy and struggles between the couples as well as domestic violence which was on the high side due to lack of tolerance and discipline. Whereas within the sub-saharan Africa, individuals are prone to early marriage to raise a good family but the power struggle between the wives and their husbands due to the fact that the couple would have to live with the bride's family leading to the wife wielding power and influence over the man in a system called matrilocal that gives the woman an edge over the man (Sernau, 2006). Marriages contracted with the wrong person is prone not to be stable and some romantic love affairs that was a threat to a family, is capable of causing wars; for instance, that of Camelot's Guinevere and Lancelot, Romeo and Juliet, etc were disastrous. Some families hold on tenaciously on their lineages because of concerns about heirs, property inheritance, social status and lands for futuristic sustenance. Within these early stages of societal existence, female virginity before marriage was highly reckoned with as essential and vital ways of knowing ideal wife material. Again, children were then seen to be many as to help in farming and serve as security at their parents old age, but the industrial modernization period shattered almost all these model of family existence and marriage pattern (Sernau, 2006).

Moreover, the divorce rate keeps on increasing because majorly, women and wives at this modern age have opportunity of amassing their own health and are constantly struggling for gender equality. These have made it difficult for some women and wives to respect the men or their husbands with the notion that after all, what can a man do for them, if it is sex, they have the capacity to get any young man to their wims and caprices and use them to satisfy their sexual urges at any given point in time. This has been the reason divorce rate is very high in the industrial world which has influenced that of Nigeria, because the female folks are now well educated and are working class women. In this regard, the Roman Catholic Church has strongly kicked against divorce and as a matter of seriousness; they do not allow divorce when once you are married in the Church (church solemnization of marriage). However, in Japan divorce rate is far low, not for juicy marriages rather it is because of the strong stigma against divorce (Sernau, 2006).

In Igbo land today precisely Imo State people, divorce rate is on the increase because of the character of very many of the women that are married and their area of interest presently, which is centered on material things. Only very few that knows the meaning of marriage and the sanctity nor do they have pay any attention to the struggles of early women on the right of chastity rather, they prefer to divorce their husbands at any point when the going becomes rough, no longer smooth and trending as before. Easily, they become slay queens scanting for men with what it takes to provide their needs and wants. Many Imo State women are ready to do anything to get what they want without regard to their husbands or marriage vows. Some were not even properly married to their so called husbands and are ready to bounce out any time, without minding, when things go wrong. Every husband will be glad, if the man has a good wife, a humble wife, a cheerful and respectful wife that attends to his needs and cares for him. It will help to elongate the man's life and make him rejoice and equally be grateful to God for such a wonderful gift. On the contrary, a wicked, disrespectful and promiscuous wife is a death device that kills the husband gradually and such are mostly the changes or character that destroys marriage. In Igbo parlance, character is the beauty of a woman (Agwa bum ma nwanyi) while money is the handsomeness of a man (Ego bum ma nwoke). Such bad characters lead to unbearable feelings on the side of the significant other or half that is being hurt by the character of the opposite hence, divorce or long term separation. Some women over time develop acerbic character that is repulsive enough to disassociate with rather, very few can be eliven with their fellow humans in an understanding manner.

Again, since divorce presently is on the increase, in other to accurately get the rate of stable marriages in a year, statistically, it is better to use the refined divorce rate – mechanism – which is determined by dividing the number of divorces each year by the total number of existing marriages in that year”

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(Sullivan, 2003:82 – 83). Most of this divorce cases are because of a man indulging in a polygamous setting by marrying another wife, joining to the already existing wife at the same time in Igbo land. Whereas in the west, what is obtainable over there is patent polygamy where a man gets married to a lady and divorce after some years and get married to another, just like that it might get up to three or four wives at different intervals. In other words, it is a serial monogamy where “a person is allowed to have more than one spouse, just not at the same time” (Sullivan, 2003:84).

Regrettably, there are some glaring negative effects of divorce in marriages which do affect both the parents and the children of such family. Among the noticeable negative effects include, disfunctionality in the family operations, because they will no longer function as before, blended family ties due to too many marriages contracted due to divorce, disruptive and troubling experiences on both the two Ex, feelings of guilt and frustration or failure, children are prone to form coalition with their mother, high level of delinquency and waywardness on the side of the children, dropouts due to failure to concentrate in school or funding in addition to lack of control, poor parenting caused by transferred aggression, high level of conflict relationship amongs the families, high level or rate of depression on family members, loneliness and anger all the time caused by unhappy existence, and lastly low self-esteem that is destructive as well as stigmatization in the community.

In this regard, it is usually difficult to fix, resolve or reconcile ex-broken marriages, as a matter of fact, it amounts to faking, because of some reasons which are as follows; the divorced couple usually exhibit no change in character, elements of unresolved issues, glaring toxic relationship, side chick matter is often difficult to terminate, they – mostly the wife – prone to abusive expressions on the man – husband, high level of dishonesty due to the separate life experience within the limited period, selfish mind set all the time, repeated crime addiction, the lacuna experiences during the period of separation or divorce, persistent poverty and hardship, less regard or lack of respect to the husband by the wife, there is bound to be stressful relationship, drug addiction caused by the loneliness and low self esteem and finally when the wife is unapologetic.

KEY TO MARRIAGE SUSTAINABILITY

Marriage can be sustained peacefully when a wife realizes that beauty is in obedience and that a Jezebelic, rebellious woman is treated anyhow by the husband. Security in other words, protection is very necessary if any couple wants their marriage to last for a life time. Therefore, there is need to build hedges to ensure adequate protection of ones marriage before paving ways for the unexpected to take place and destroy the loving union of two happily married couple. In this regard, there is much need to care for each other mutually, wife submissiveness in compulsory, there should not be deprivation especially sex and food, decent dressing at home of wives is a necessary condition for a healthy marriage, respect of privacy, support to each other, there should not be any sort of cheating, etc. Judging by the aforementioned factors, one will then understand why many married women this days indulge in extra marital affairs. Some of the reasons are enlisted as thus;

- **Wrong Partner** – marriage that is pressured into by family members, attracted by wealth, handsomeness and not by love is bound to have that lost of feelings for the husband.
- **Great Misunderstanding** – that is caused by quarrels, unending arguments, abuse and insults from the husband to the wife.
- **Bad Company** – wrong association with the bad eggs, wayward married women who indulge in promiscuity and illicit relationship with other men because of influence, money, power and neglect on the side of the husbands.

- **Less Attention and Non-existence of Love** – when a husband pays little or no attention to the wife as to understand her mood, needs and desires, that wife is bound to step outside in search of a company or another straying man to catch fun with.
- **Lack of Respect and Less Value Attached to the Wife by the Husband** – anything any husband is doing in connection with another woman should be kept secret to the wife as a mark of respect and value to the wife. For if the wife gets to know, she may decide to retaliate by indulging in promiscuous life as a pay back to the husband.
- **Talking to Male Friends** – closeness to male friends often culminate to sleeping together in any confused state or condition. Keeping male friends is very bad for married woman because prevention is much more better than treatment.
- **Drug Addiction** – some husbands do take drugs, an enhancing drugs to enable them satisfy their wives. Over time, the side effect of those drugs could affect the male sexual organ, resulting to sexual dysfunction. At that point, the husband has taken her to a desirable experience and could no longer continue, she may desire to continue to have that feeling which will lead her to stray to other men available.

On the contrary, there are keys to marriage durability which many couples have ignored. Therefore, to sustain a marriage, couples are meant to love each other very well, communicate often, remain faithful in trust, have good understanding, stay, together most times and sleep together in one bedroom under one roof, remain and maintain cleanliness all the time because freshening up makes one so appealing and appetizing, have and maintain due respect from both couple, submissiveness on the side of the wife to the/her husband, care relationship on both sides in marriage, friendship of couple as best partners in marriage, responsibility taken by both couple respectively, always pray together morning and night, be romantic and have sex regularly, etc. With all these put into practice and maintained, it will definitely sustain the marriage, irrespective of the politics that do go on in the family and it will encourage other couples and the society will be a better place to be happy. Most importantly, “the choices we make determine the quality, direction, and results of our lives. If we want to enjoy life today and embrace everything the future holds for us, we must learn to make right choices – and – happiness is something you decide on ahead of time. Whether I like the room or not, does not depend on how the furniture is arranged, it is how I arrange my mind. I have already decided to love it” (Meyer, 2008:70 – 71). The choice and subsequent actions determines sustainability in marriage.

Age gap can determine the longevity of marriage relationship. It is ideal for a man to be a senior to the bride, else there won't be a harmonious relationship because most times the wife will find it difficult to accept what the husband decides. This is dangerously experienced mostly in Nigeria among the Igbos, with regrets at last on the side of the husband. Most Igbo women find it difficult to respect their husbands much less the one she is senior to or is at the same age bracket. Therefore, for sustainability in marriage, irrespective of family politics, young men are advised to marry someone they gave up to five years gap at least for respect sake from the wife or wives. Although, there are exceptions in the developed countries for instance, the marriage relationship between the president of France – Emmanuel Macron and his significant other, etc. age difference of the wife being his senior by far does not constraint their love harmonious relationship in marriage. Marriages based on physical attraction is difficult to sustain when there are changes because the physical appearance will change obviously with time. So the relationship will go soar for longevity and sustainability, marriages should be contracted beyond physical appearance as a major reason. In Nigeria, majorly in Igbo land, women can decide to marry a very aged man and a young man can equally decide to marry a very old woman, just to get out

of poverty and that is what I called Marriage Market Value (MMV). And such marriage longevity is based on the cash flow or wealth continuity.

CONCLUSION

For sustainability to be maintained in marriage institution, family members should draw their boundaries, not to intrude into an affair that is meant for two only or more as the case may be, because marriage in Igbo land is between husband and wife or wives.

Bastardization of the Igbo culture and tradition is seen to be another constraints towards sustainability of marriages in Imo State, where family members will kick against any man taking two or more wives, emulating the English tradition and culture of one wife at a time, popularly based on their drastic reduced population and religion is very wrong. The cling or cleave process is meant for husband and wife or wives because God Almighty supported multiple wives when he rebuked King David for taking another man's wife, as he said that he gave King David the wives of his master and affirmed that he would have given him more had it been that was not enough for him (King James, 1979). God was not against polygamy but was only annoyed with King David for taking another man's wife and indirectly killing the man to own his wife. So modernity and educational financial empowerment of the female folks in Imo State hailed to the challenge of Igbo tradition and culture to revert to monogamy forgetting that a husband can cling to any of his wife and both will produce one flesh.

Lastly, sustainability of marriages will be a difficult task if discrimination is not put to an end. As well as the selection of tribe, class, etc and the segregation that is going on among the so called diala and the Osu caste system in Igbo land that is a huge constraint to the sustainability of marriages in Imo State of Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATION

There is need to recommend path ways to sustain marriages in Igbo land, with particular reference to Imo State in Nigeria, which are as follows:

- Young adults should be allowed to marry whom they are in love with, to drastically minimize the rate of separation or divorce in the land.
- Family members should support married couples in all ramifications for durable and harmonious co-existence.
- There should not be any sort of segregation or discrimination among the people in Imo State for all are one.
- Government should abolish the caste system by law and set remedy for non compliance by anybody from the area concerned.
- Marriage rights should be reduced to the affordable level to avoid fathers taken responsibility, this will make it easy for the youths to be able to carry on with the marriage rights without much stress.
- Investigative process should be put aside because love conquers everything, an entangled person who is in love will love and care for the spouse very well to the best of his ability and capacity.

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