THE IMPACT OF DIVORCE ON THE REALISATION OF THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

Divorce, like a tapeworm, has eaten so deep into the fibers of our being that many nations tend to ignore the dangers that it poses to society. This article examines the impact of divorce particularly on children and places emphasis on the rights available to the children of a marriage. The major statutes and instrument guarding the rights of children are the Matrimonial Causes Act, the Child's Rights Act/Laws, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, which make provisions governing the way and manner in which divorce proceedings are carried out and also attempt to protect the interest of the child. Section 71(1) of the MCA, 1970 requires the court in matters of custody, guardianship, welfare advancement and education of the child, to regard the interests of the child as the paramount consideration. The rights of children can be expressed or spelled out in the court of law. However the concept of the rights of children of a dissolved marriage has not been highlighted because there are no express laws specifically providing for the rights of children of divorced couples in Nigeria. The court ensures that the children of this marriage are being cared for, but there are still instances where they may not get the desired love and care like children whose parents are together in marriage. The purpose of this article is to identify laws expressly providing for the rights of children of divorced couples, among other things. The article adopts the doctrinal research method, with primary and secondary sources, which review the roles of both the legal and institutional frameworks established to foster, recognize, observe and protect rights of children of divorce. The article recommends that laws regulating divorce should be revisited periodically. In addition, there should be continuous education of couples on the dangers of divorce.

Keywords: Children, Divorce, Impact, Realization, Rights.

HISTORICAL ORIGIN OF DIVORCE LAW IN NIGERIA

The evolution of divorce law in Nigeria is a testament to the intricate interplay between cultural traditions, religious beliefs, colonial influences, and the modern legal framework. Nigeria's diverse society, comprising numerous ethnic groups and religious affiliations, has contributed to the complexity of its marriage and divorce laws[1].

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[1] Chika Ogbuefi 'The Legal Framework for Protecting Children's Rights in Divorce Cases in Nigeria' [2020] (8)(3) *Nigerian Family Law Journal*, 125.

Before the advent of colonial rule, Nigeria's ethnic groups each had their own distinct cultural practices and norms governing marriage and divorce. These practices were deeply rooted in communal values, with marriages often involving not just the couple but their families and communities. Divorce existed as recourse, but community elders and traditional leaders who sought to maintain harmony and balance within the social fabric, typically guided it.

Post-independence Nigeria continued to grapple with the complexities of marriage and divorce law. The co-existence of customary, religious, and statutory legal systems presented challenges in creating a harmonious legal framework. The Muslim-majority northern states adopted Sharia law for matters related to marriage and divorce, while the southern states followed the Matrimonial Causes Act based on English law principles.[2]

Despite legal reforms, many Nigerians continue to uphold their traditional practices and beliefs when it comes to marriage and divorce. Customary marriages, which often lack formal documentation, are still prevalent, particularly in rural areas. This has led to situations where legal recognition and protection for women and children might be lacking.[3]In recent times, efforts have been made to address these challenges. Legal reforms have been proposed and enacted to better accommodate Nigeria's cultural diversity while safeguarding individual rights. However, finding a delicate balance between respecting traditions and ensuring equitable legal remedies remains a complex task.

The historical origin of divorce law in Nigeria reflects the nation's intricate cultural tapestry, colonial history, and ongoing efforts to navigate a complex legal landscape. The co-existence of multiple legal systems and the tension between tradition and modernity continue to shape the evolution of divorce law in the country.[4]

WHO QUALIFIES AS A CHILD UNDER NIGERIAN LAW?

In Nigerian law, the definition and qualification of a child varies based on the specific legal context and legislation referred to. It is important to note that Nigeria is a federation with multiple legal systems operating concurrently, including customary law, religious law (such as Sharia law in some states), and statutory law. Consequently, the definition of a child can differ depending on whether one is considering civil law, customary law or religious law. More so, as various statutory provisions define who a child is; in relation to the particular subject matter they seek to address same thus, the 1999

[2]Chidi Emeka, *Children's Rights and Divorce in Nigeria* (Legal Insights 2009).
[3] Isaac Nwogugu, *Family Law in Nigeria*, (Heineman, 2014) 268.
[4] Igwe Chidinma 'Legal Remedies for Children Affected by Parental Alienation in Divorce' [2016] (8)(4) *Journal of Child Advocacy*, 211.

constitution impliedly defines a person who is not up to the age 18 as a child however this is used in the context of citizenship whereas under the Nigerian Criminal Code, a child is defined as any person who is under the age of 12 years. This definition, it must be noted, is used to establish the legal capacity of individuals under the age of 12 in matters related to criminal responsibility and capacity to commit certain offences. However, the Child's Rights Act of 2003 (CRA) provides the most emphatic definition of a child. According to the Child's Rights Act, section 21, a 'child' is defined as any person who has not attained the age of 18 years. This definition is used as a reference point in various legal matters, including child protection, education, and employment.

THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

The United Nations CRC, the most widely accepted human rights instrument in history, changed how children were viewed and treated; indeed Nigeria signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1991, and with UNICEF's support, took the important step of domesticating the CRC into a national law. The Act was informed by the mandate to consolidate all laws, national and otherwise, relating to children, into a single piece of legislation that specified the rights and responsibilities of children, duties and obligations of parents, bodies, organization, authorities, adults and the government with regards to the realization of this right's protection, its respect and fulfillment.[5]

A child in Nigerian law is one who has not attained the age of 18 years, and it categorically provides that such a child's best interests shall remain paramount in all considerations.[6] The Act also provides that a child shall be given such protection and care as is necessary for his or her wellbeing, retaining the right to survival, development and to a name and nationality at birth. The states through the wordings of the Act are expected to formally adopt and adapt the Act through its domestication at the state level in the Houses of Assembly of each state as state laws, since issues pertaining to child rights protection are residual matters in Nigeria, hereby making states have exclusive responsibility and power to make laws relevant to their specific situations. State laws inimical to the rights of the child are also to be amended or annulled as may be required to conform to the Act and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In Nigeria, since the Child's Rights Act was passed into law, about 24 states have both passed and given assent to child's rights laws in their states; the legal effect being that millions of children in

[5] Micah Attah, *Family Welfare Law in Nigeria (*Ambik Press Ltd, 2016) 42.
[6]Igwe Chidinma 'Legal Remedies for Children Affected by Parental Alienation in Divorce' [2016] (8)(4) *Journal of Child Advocacy*, 211.

12 States in Nigeria still do not have the appropriate legal framework for their rights to be protected. This means that millions of 'tomorrow's leader' in states without legal framework for child rights' protection are not being cared for, as they should, due to lack of enforcement mechanisms and illiteracy on matters as of these rights in the grass roots, as most illiterates and some educated persons are either unaware of Child Rights laws or are indifferent towards it. In addition, the lackadaisical attitude of the ruling class towards this very crucial matters is worthy of note.

The Enforcement of the Rights of Children under the Child Rights Act 2003

The Child's Rights Act 2003 serves as the primary legal framework for children's rights in Nigeria. It outlines the rights of children, the responsibilities of parents and guardians, and the role of institutions. Courts, including family courts, are established to adjudicate cases relating to child abuse, neglect, custody, and other matters concerning children. The legal system provides a formal avenue for addressing violations of children's rights and seeking justice.

Enforcing the rights of children under the Child's Rights Act 2003 in Nigeria is a multifaceted endeavor that involves a combination of legal frameworks, social initiatives, institutional mechanisms, and community engagement. The Act itself serves as the bedrock for the protection and promotion of children's rights, but its effective implementation varies across regions due to factors such as awareness, cultural diversity, and available resources. Below are ways by which the enforcement of the provisions of the Childs Rights Act and laws can be enhanced:

a. Awareness and Sensitization Campaigns**:** Creating awareness about children's rights is a fundamental aspect of enforcement. Government agencies, NGOs, and civil society organizations should conduct awareness campaigns targeting parents, educators, law enforcement agencies, and the public. These campaigns aim to change attitudes, raise consciousness about the rights of children, and encourage reporting of violations.

b. Child Protection Units and Specialized Services**:** Law enforcement agencies should have established child protection units to handle cases involving child abuse, exploitation, and trafficking. These units are equipped with trained personnel who are sensitive to the needs of children and provide a safe space for reporting and addressing violations.

c. Child-Friendly Approaches: The emphasis on child-friendly approaches is evident in the establishment of family courts and child protection units. These settings aim to create an environment

where children can express themselves freely without fear or intimidation. Specialized personnel, such as social workers, ensure that children's voices are heard and their best interests are prioritized.

d. Collaboration and Partnerships**:** Enforcement efforts are strengthened through collaboration between government bodies, NGOs, international organizations, and communities. These partnerships pool resources, expertise, and advocacy efforts to address the complex challenges related to children's rights. Collaboration is essential for effectively enforcing children's rights across diverse regions.

e. Training and Capacity Building: Professionals working with children, such as law enforcement officers, teachers, healthcare providers, and social workers, should be equipped to receive training on children's rights and child-friendly approaches. This equips them with the knowledge and skills needed to handle cases involving children sensitively and effectively.

f. Reporting Mechanisms and Whistleblower Protection: The Act establishes mechanisms for reporting violations of children's rights, ensuring that concerned individuals can report incidents without fear of reprisals. This protection encourages the reporting of abuses, leading to more enforcement that is effective.

Challenges to the enforcement of children's Right

The enforcement of children's rights in Nigeria faces several challenges, which can hinder the effective protection and promotion of these rights. These challenges are complex and often interconnected, making it crucial to address them comprehensively. Here are some of the key challenges to the enforcement of children's rights in Nigeria:

i] Legal Framework and Implementation Gap

ii] Lack of Awareness and Education

iii] Cultural and Traditional Practices

iv] Poverty and Socioeconomic Inequality

v] Child Labour and Trafficking

vi] Access to Quality Education

vii] Inadequate Healthcare and Nutrition

viii] Weak Child Protection Systems

ix] Child Trafficking and Exploitation

x] Armed Conflicts and Insecurity

xi] Corruption and Impunity

xii] Data Collection and Reporting

xiii] Access to Legal Services

To effectively address these challenges and improve the enforcement of children's rights in Nigeria, concerted efforts are needed from the government, civil society organizations, international partners, and the community at large. This includes raising awareness about children's rights, improving access to education and healthcare, strengthening child protection systems, and addressing cultural and traditional practices that harm children. Additionally, ensuring that laws and policies are effectively implemented and enforced is crucial for safeguarding the rights and well-being of Nigerian children.[7]

GROUNDS FOR DISSOLUTION OF MARRIAGE

In Nigeria, the grounds for dissolution of marriage are governed by various legal frameworks, including both statutory and customary laws. The specific grounds for divorce may vary depending on the type of marriage (civil, customary, or religious) and the legal jurisdiction.[8] This study will however focus on the customary and statutory modes.

A major distinction between the statutory marriage and customary marriage is that unlike the customary marriage, the only ground upon which parties to a statutory marriage may seek for dissolution of marriage under the Matrimonial Causes Act is that, 'the marriage has broken down irretrievably'**.** In this regard, the Matrimonial Causes Act, section 15(1) provides for a sole ground for terminating Marriages under the Act. The section provides that, 'A petition under this Act by a party to a marriage for a decree of dissolution of the marriage may be presented to the court by either party to the marriage upon the ground that the marriage has broken down irretrievably.' The conditions upon which a court shall hold that the marriage has broken down irretrievably are stipulated in section 15(2) (a) – (h) of the Act. In the case of customary marriage on the other hand, this is not necessarily the case. There are strictly speaking, no 'grounds' for dissolution of customary marriages in Nigeria, if that term is used in its technical connotation of facts that the law requires to be established before divorce could be granted by the courts as we have in the dissolution of statutory marriages. Given that, marriage under customary law may be lawfully dissolved by mutual consent; a state of affairs, which will constitute 'collusion' and therefore an absolute bar to divorce under the Matrimonial Causes Act.

Generally, therefore whether dissolution of customary marriage is sought judicially or extra-judicially by parties, no reason or ground need be stated or established by the party seeking dissolution.

[7]Okoro Ifeanyi 'The Intersection of Culture and Children's Rights in Nigerian Divorce Cases' [2018] (11)(1) *African Culture and Legal Studies.*

[8]Different states or regions may have variations in laws.

It is sufficient if either or both parties state unambiguously that he or she is no longer interested in the marriage without necessarily alleging or establishing any ground. Nonetheless, over the years, a number of reasons and circumstances have been accepted and recognized by case law as constituting sufficient grounds to dissolve a customary marriage. These grounds have evolved out of a body of complaints that are commonly alleged and established by parties to a failing customary marriage upon which has formed the basis for the Judicial or non- judicial termination of a customary marriage. They do not however constitute a condition precedent for the dissolution sought by either or both parties. The common denominator of all these common grounds is that the parties to the failing customary marriage have 'irreconcilable differences' or 'that the marriage has broken down irretrievably' in the semblance of, or akin to statutory marriages, such that they cannot reasonably be expected to live together as husband and wife.

These irreconcilable differences can be due to numerous reasons. Therefore, once parties find that, for reasons which shall soon be examined here, their marriage under customary law has completely broken down or irreconcilable differences exist, such a marriage can and will rightly be terminated either judicially or non- judicially. The established grounds for dissolution of customary marriage are numerous and the categories are never closed and largely vary from one community to another, society to society, village to village. In the labyrinth of this disparity, there are some common grounds. These grounds can be classified into two categories. They are (a) General; and (b) statutory grounds. These grounds are examined in detail below.

General Grounds

Some common grounds for termination of customary marriages in most societies in Nigeria include the following:

(a) Irreconcilable differences: Under this generic head, various acts, which amount to a misconduct on the part of either of the spouses, may give rise to differences that are grievous enough that all attempts to resolve it proved abortive. Any or all of the other grounds enumerated herein may either, acting alone or in combination with other grievances, be sufficient to generate such differences that make it impossible for the couples to live together as husband and wife. For instance, adultery can on its own generate differences between couples that become irreconcilable enough to lead to the demise of

customary marriage.[9] It can be said of any or all of the other general or statutory grounds highlighted below.

(b) Abandonment or Desertion: Any form of desertion of the marriage by either party to a customary marriage entitles the other party to seek the termination of the marriage. According to Nwogugu, desertion under customary law does not require separation for any specific period. Desertion by a husband is very rare, and almost unknown to customary law, as a man cannot leave his family simply because of the behavior of the wife.[10] With respect, this view no longer holds true in modern societies in view of the fact that in present times men have been known to desert their wives in pursuit of the pleasure of another woman or women. A deserting husband may also be simply fleeing from the aggression, violence, intolerance, threats et cetera of his wife.

Once it is established, therefore, that a man or woman in a customary marriage has unreasonably abandoned the matrimonial home without an intention of returning, this will form a veritable ground for terminating the marriage. The court has no power to compel a deserting party to return to the marriage because, 'An attempt to do so will be an infringement of the Constitutional rights of the deserting party.' This was the decision of the court in *Egri v Uperi.*[11]

(c) Adultery: A very common highly contentious ground for dissolution of customary law marriage is the ground of adultery. Under customary law, when adultery is committed by a man, this is generally not a viable ground to premise an application or request for termination of marriage. This is so because, under customary law, a man is entitled to more than one wife, given the polygamous nature of the marriage. Therefore, even if a man is caught in the act of adultery, it is common for such a man to either claim to want to marry the woman, actively laying the foundation to do so or marry her outright. A man is therefore entitled under customary law to be unfaithful to his wife or wives. Conversely, under customary law, where a woman is caught in the act of adultery, her husband is entitled to promptly seek the termination of the marriage. In some communities, the belief is that any condonation of adultery by a man of his wife's adultery will result in either his death or that of the children of the marriage. In *Loye v Loye*,[12] the marriage between the couples was dissolved on grounds of adultery. Some writers[13] have argued that the above position under customary marriage law calls for statutory

[9] Okoro Emeka, *Children's Rights and Divorce in Nigeria* (Legal Insights 2009).
[10] Itse Sagay, *Nigerian Family Law Principles, Cases, Statutes, and Commentries*, (Malthouse, 1999) 546.
[11] Chioma Ngozi, *Legal Perspectives on Child Custody in Nigerian Divorce Cases: A Comprehensive Guide* (3rd supp, JurisBooks 2019).
[12] *Loye* v *Loye* (1984) NWLR (Pt 303) 45.
[13] Isaac Nwogugu, *Family Law in Nigeria*, (Heineman, 2014) 268.

reforms in consonance with the position on dissolution under the Act. That is to say that any extra-marital relations should be grounds for divorce so that a customary law wife could divorce her husband for his adultery or, that adultery by either party should not constitute a fact or ground for divorce, especially so in the case of a wife whose adultery did not result in pregnancy. With respect, this view does not take cognizance of the peculiar fact that customary law derives its source from the customs and usages of the people and is indeed reflective as a, 'mirror of accepted usages'. Therefore, polygamy being an integral part of customary marriages in most African Societies, adultery on the part of a man, as have been stated above, does not draw the same revulsion as that of a woman.

(d) Lack of maintenance, Cruelty or ill-treatment of either party: Under customary law, a man is under a legal obligation to provide his wife and children with the necessities of life such as food, shelter, clothing, medical care et cetera. The customary law wife could seek to terminate her marriage if the husband is unable or unwilling to perform any of his foregoing duties of maintenance towards her or their children. The same can also be said where either party is guilty of cruel or ill treatment. In *Adeyemi v Adeyemi*,[14] a husband obtained divorce after proof of cruelty of the wife, which the court described as, 'stranger than fiction'.

Similarly, in *Rebecca Kpera v John Kpera*,[15] a petition for divorce, the parties got married in 1962 in Kaduna under Tiv Customary law. The basis for the petition was cruelty, assault and adultery. The trial court declined to grant divorce on the ground of insufficient evidence of cruelty. On appeal, the judgment of the trial Upper Area Court was set aside. The appeal was allowed and divorce granted on the ground that there was sufficient evidence to justify cruelty.

(e) Impotence or Sterility: Impotence on the part of a man or sterility (inability to procreate) of either spouse is a very potent ground for dissolution of customary marriage. This is because, generally, African societies place premium on procreation of children as the main reason or at least one of the main reasons for contracting a marriage.

(f) Other General Grounds: Other general grounds for dissolution of customary marriage include Insanity, leprosy or other life threatening diseases, failure or inability to consummate the marriage, lack of respect; fetish practices or witchcraft et cetera.

IMPACT OF DIVORCE ON CHILDREN

[14] *Adeyemi* v *Adeyemi* (1989) NWLR (Pt 189) 45

[15] Okonkwo Uche, *Parental Responsibilities and Divorce: Protecting Children's Rights in a Changing Society* (Law Masters 2006)

Divorce is a complex and life-altering event that can have profound effects on children. While the experience varies from child to child and is influenced by numerous factors, several common impacts emerge from research and anecdotal evidence. These impacts encompass emotional, psychological, social, and even long-term effects that can shape a child's development and well-being.

Emotional Distress and Turmoil: Children often undergo a whirlwind of emotions when their parents' divorce. Feelings of sadness, confusion, anger, and anxiety can dominate their emotional landscape. The loss of a unified family unit and the sense of stability can trigger a profound sense of grief. Many children experience a deep fear of abandonment, which may lead to clinginess, nightmares, and separation anxiety.

Psychological Struggles: Divorce can leave lasting psychological scars on children. Their self-esteem may take a hit, leading to feelings of inadequacy and insecurity. Some children develop behavioral issues as they grapple with their emotions. Aggression, defiance, and acting out might become coping mechanisms to express their distress.

Academic Challenges: The disruptions caused by divorce can greatly affect a child's academic life. Stress and emotional turmoil can affect their concentration and ability to perform well in school. Changes in living arrangements and altered routines may further affect their ability to excel academically.

Relationship Complications: The experience of divorce can shape children's future relationships. Trust issues, fear of vulnerability, and difficulty in forming emotional connections can arise. These children might have a heightened fear of being hurt or abandoned in relationships.

Long-Term Effects: Divorce impacts are not confined to childhood; they often extend into adulthood. Children of divorce may approach relationships, commitment, and marriage differently. Some may be hesitant to marry, fearing a repeat of their parents' experience. Others might have a higher likelihood of experiencing divorce themselves; potentially perpetuating a cycle.

Coping Mechanisms: Children devise coping strategies to navigate the emotional turmoil caused by divorce. Some withdraw from social activities and isolate themselves, while others act out in search of

attention and affirmation. Certain children may become overly responsible, assuming adult roles to fill the void left by the changing family dynamic.

Parental Conflict: Ongoing conflict between divorced parents can intensify the stress on children. Being caught in the middle of disputes and witnessing hostility can lead to feelings of guilt, confusion, and divided loyalties.

Custody and Stability: Changes in living arrangements, custody agreements, and visitation schedules can destabilize a child's sense of security and belonging. Adjusting to two households, new family dynamics, and potential changes in schools can exacerbate the challenges they face.

Financial Strain: Divorce can lead to financial strain for both parents. The shift in financial circumstances might affect a child's access to resources, extracurricular activities, and opportunities that contribute to their overall development.

Resilience and Support: It is important to acknowledge that not all children experience the negative impacts of divorce in the same way. Some children display remarkable resilience and adaptability. A strong support system, including positive relationships with parents, extended family, friends, and even counseling, can play a pivotal role in helping children navigate the challenges posed by divorce.

In conclusion, the impacts of divorce on children are multifaceted and can have far-reaching consequences across various aspects of their lives. While the negative effects are significant, it is essential to recognize that with the right support, communication, and resources, children can find ways to cope, heal, and build meaningful lives despite the challenges posed by divorce.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this article has delved into the multifaceted aspects of divorce and its impact on the realization of children's rights in Nigeria. The historical origin of divorce law in Nigeria reflects the complex interplay between traditional customs, colonial influences, and modern legal frameworks. Nigeria's diverse society, comprising various ethnic groups and religious affiliations, has contributed to the intricacy of its marriage and divorce laws.

The definition of a child in Nigerian law varies depending on the specific legal context and legislation being referenced. While there are variations in definitions based on civil, customary, or religious laws, the Child's Rights Act of 2003 provides a comprehensive definition, stating that a child is any person who has not attained the age of 18 years. This definition serves as a reference point for various legal matters concerning children.

The enforcement of children's rights under the Child's Rights Act 2003 faces numerous challenges. These challenges include gaps in the legal framework and its implementation, lack of awareness and education about children's rights, limited access to quality education, child marriage, weak child protection systems, and issues related to data collection and reporting. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from government, civil society organizations, international partners, and the community.

The article also explored the grounds for the dissolution of marriage in Nigeria, both under customary and statutory laws. Common grounds for divorce include irreconcilable differences, abandonment or desertion, and adultery. These grounds vary depending on the type of marriage and jurisdiction.

Furthermore, the article examined the profound impact of divorce on children. Divorce can cause emotional distress and turmoil, psychological struggles, academic challenges, relationship complications, and financial strain. However, it is essential to acknowledge that not all children experience divorce in the same way, and many can display resilience and adaptability with the right support system.

In conclusion, the article underscores the need for a holistic approach to addressing the impact of divorce on children in Nigeria. This approach should encompass legal reforms, increased awareness of children's rights, improved access to education and healthcare, strengthened child protection systems, and efforts to challenge harmful cultural practices. By working together as a society, we can better protect the rights and well-being of Nigerian children and ensure that they have the opportunity to thrive despite the challenges posed by divorce.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this article, several recommendations are proposed to address the impact of divorce on the realization of children's rights in Nigeria. These recommendations aim to create a more supportive and protective environment for children who experience divorce:

Legal Reforms:

a. Review and amend existing divorce laws to ensure that they prioritize the best interests of children and provide clearer guidelines for child custody, support, and visitation rights.
b. Consider implementing a mandatory waiting period or counseling requirement before finalizing divorce proceedings to encourage reconciliation and minimize impulsive decisions.

Access to Education:

a. Ensure that children of divorced couples have uninterrupted access to quality education. Schools should be sensitive to their emotional needs and provide necessary support.
b. Establish programs to address the financial challenges faced by divorced parents, which can affect a child's access to education.

Child Protection Systems:

a. Strengthen child protection agencies and social services to promptly respond to cases of child rights violations and provide counseling and support to affected children.
b. Train law enforcement and judicial personnel to handle child-related cases with sensitivity and in accordance with the law.

Counseling and Support:

a. Make counseling services readily available to children and families undergoing divorce, both through government agencies and non-governmental organizations.
b. Encourage parents to engage in family counseling to help them understand the emotional needs of their children during and after divorce.

Data Collection and Research:

a. Establish a comprehensive database for tracking child rights violations and divorce-related issues, ensuring that accurate data is collected to inform policymaking.
b. Encourage research on the long-term effects of divorce on children in Nigeria to gain a deeper understanding of their evolving needs.

Alternative Dispute Resolution:

a. Promote alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, such as mediation and arbitration, to resolve divorce-related issues amicably, reducing the adversarial nature of divorce proceedings.
b. Encourage parents to prioritize co-parenting and open communication for the sake of their children.

Financial Support:

a. Enforce child support orders diligently, ensuring that non-custodial parents fulfill their financial responsibilities towards their children.
b. Develop programs to assist custodial parents in securing financial stability after divorce to provide a stable environment for their children.

Research and Evaluation:

a. Encourage ongoing research and evaluation of the effectiveness of policies and interventions aimed at mitigating the impact of divorce on children.
b. Use research findings to adapt and improve existing programs and policies.

These recommendations, if implemented effectively, can contribute to a more child-centered approach to divorce in Nigeria, ensuring that the rights and well-being of children are safeguarded during this challenging life transition. It is essential for government agencies, civil society organizations, religious institutions, and communities to work collaboratively to create a supportive environment for children facing divorce.