

**EZRA 9-10 AND RACIAL INTERMARRAIGE DISCRIMINATION IN
THE CONTEXT OF ITS SOCIAL EFFECTS ON SINGLE
MOTHERHOOD IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The disapproval of intermarriages between Israelites and other nations has received scholarly attention from Judeo-Christian traditions and Eurocentric literature. However, the social effects of such dissolutions on single motherhood have not been given a focus in contemporary Nigerian society, hence this study filled this gap and aimed at looking at social effects on single mother parenthood in the contemporary Nigerian society. Though, considered from the concept of idolatrous tendencies through the lenses of postexilic Judaism and “exclusivistic” nature of Jewish traditions, racial discrimination and intermarriage dissolutions by postexilic leaders in Ezra 9 and 10 and the aftermaths on the single mother parenthood in the contemporary Nigerian women experience did more havocs than expected due to its social menace and stigma. The study employed historical and exegetical analyses using secondary sources of data collection. The Interracial Relationship Development Model (Foeman & Nance, 1999) served as the theoretical basis of the study. Findings showed intermarriage dissolutions due to racial dissections did not bring lasting solutions but rather created some social menace, ‘exclusively’ unfounded in the Torah, impaired the marital enjoyment of the foreigners thereby denying them of their economic, social and fundamental freedom with psychological, physical, financial, social and medical effects.

In addition, the marital segregation instigated by post exilic leaders spearheaded by Ezra was an exclusion based on national prejudice.

Keywords: Racial Discrimination, Intermarriage Dissolutions, Effects, Single Parenthood

Introduction

Israel as a nation has religious and historical backgrounds documented in the canonized Bible. They are descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Jacob had his name changed to Israel at Peniel [Gen 32: 31]; the name adopted by the twelve sons of the patriarch as they became a nation through their sojourn in Egypt for 430 years. After crossing the Red Sea, Yahweh gave them guiding principles through which the new nation would be governed at Sinai (Exo 19: 9, 18). Primarily, Yahweh warned the Israelites against idolatry; “*You shall have no other gods before Me*” (Exo 20: 3). Emphasizing this commandment, Yahweh disapproved intermarriage between the Israelites and other nations with the view that intermarriage could lead to idolatry as seen in the life of king Solomon and Ahab (Deut 7: 3 – 4; I Kings 11: 1 – 8; 16: 31 – 33). Thus, the rationale behind the disapproval of intermarriages between Israelites and other nations should be understood in the concept of idolatry tendencies alone. It should be recalled that Yahweh also approved intermarriage without prejudice on some conditions as documented in Deuteronomy 21: 10-14.

Besides, intermarriage was also recorded between Boaz and a Moabites (Ruth); Salmon and Rachab the harlot at Jericho (Ruth 4:13; Matt. 1: 5). The intermarriages were registered on the pedigree of the birth of Jesus Christ the Messiah. These unions seemed tenable since idolatry was not involved. Conversely, intermarriages observed among the returnees during the post exilic era as recorded in Ezra chapter 9 and 10 were frowned at by Ezra and the leaders because of its involvement in inter racism and perhaps idolatry. Ezra 9:1 reads “*When these things were done, the leaders came to me, saying, “The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, **with respect to the abominations of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites.**”* (Ezra 9: 1). What the “abominations of the Canaanites” connotes is not explicitly stated in the text. Besides idolatry, what other factors prompted Ezra and the leaders’ motives and actions in addressing the case? The idea of “holy seed” came into frontline, which was believed should not be mingled with the purported “polluted” seed of the gentiles. If idolatry was the main reason, all the abominations observed ought to be stopped, and all idolatrous altars destroyed following the religious reforms of Josiah, Hezekiah and Asa, the kings of Judah (II Kgs 23: 1 – 25; 18: 4; I Kgs. 15: 11-13). On the contrary, the foreign wives and children were put away and nothing was recorded about idolatrous acts.

Rhetorically, was Ezra fighting against idols or humans; against idolatry or pagan spouses? The reforms earlier mentioned were religious-driven; that of Ezra was intermarriage-driven and racism. It should be recalled that Israel committed whoredom with the daughters of Moab in the wilderness (Num 25). The method of resolving the case was a divine plague as well as the execution of the actors leading to the death of 24,000 Israelites. The post exilic leaders led by Ezra neither executed anyone nor destroy any idol or altar; rather, they dissolved marriages and disorganized homes. On whose precedence did Ezra and his team act? Thus, Ezra's act could best be regarded as a racial discrimination. Racial discrimination was defined by International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination thus: "racial discrimination shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life." The marital separation initiated by Ezra and post exilic leaders was an exclusion based on nationality with the purpose of impairing the marital enjoyment of the foreigners thereby denying them of their economic, social and fundamental freedom to their spouses. Nationality of the foreign spouses has been regarded as the basis of Ezra-post exilic leaders' discrimination acts in Ezra chapter 9 and 10. Many scholarship exercises have been conducted on racial discrimination.

These include studies on an Exegetical Study of Ephesians 2: 11-16 and Racial Discrimination, the religious roots of racism in the Western world, Racism and xenophobia: the role of the Church in South Africa as well as Racism as a challenge for church and society in democratic South Africa: Human dignity perspective; just to mention a few (Burrell, 2021; Obielosi, 2021; Stinchcomb, 2021; Ahmed *et al.*, 2020; Modise, 2020; Spangenberg, 2019; Pillay, 2017). On the contrary, it is observed that little or no scholarly research attention has been paid to the racial discrimination act by post exilic leaders recorded in Ezra Chapter 9 and 10 and its social effects on single mother parenthood in the contemporary Nigerian society. Hence, this study filled this academic vacuum by examining Judah and Racial Discrimination in the Context of Ezra Chapter 9 and 10. The purpose of the study is to examine the rationale and implications of racial discrimination of Judaist leaders in the Ezra Chapter 9 and 10. It also aimed at a critical look of social effects of racial intermarriage dissolutions and single mother parents.

Studies on racism and racial discrimination are increasingly becoming important not only in the academic circle; but in the society, legal system as well as in the

religious sector. This study contributes to existing literature, proffering solution to the menace. Additionally, the outcome of this research work serves as a tool in curbing heretical teachings on restitution using Ezra 9 and 10 among clergy and laity. The result of this study stands to provide pragmatic basis for the leadership of each sect in decision making as regards polygamy, intermarriage and cushioning the social effects of its aftermaths on single mother parenthood. Thus, this study raises the consciousness of citizens, researchers, religious leaders, the church and government on the subject matter. The research methods employed for this study include exegetical analyses, historical and secondary approaches. The historical analysis largely depends on secondary sources such as books, journal articles encyclopedia, internet and archival materials. Secondary data were obtained and employed for this study. In addition, library materials such as Bible, commentaries and other relevant materials were used. This study presents a model, which serve as its theoretical foundation; namely: The Interracial Relationship Development Model (Foeman & Nance, 1999) The theoretical models address the importance of understanding interracial couple relationships over time and the developmental processes that result in successful relationship outcomes.

Foeman and Nance (1999) developed the Interracial Relationship Development Model (IRDM) in order to understand the formation and development of interracial couple relationships. The model specifically focuses on the development of Black/White interracial relationships taking into consideration the historical experiences of anti-miscegenation between the two racial groups in the United States. The model consists of four stages that begin at the formation of the interracial couple relationship: 1) racial awareness, 2) coping, 3) identity emergence, and 4) maintenance. The authors posit that interracial couples work through each of these four stages in addition to the normal developmental experiences that all couples go through when forming a committed relationship (Foeman & Nance, 1999).

Exegetical Overview of Ezra 9 and 10

The book of Ezra is considered as one of the post exilic books written after the Babylonian exile of Judah and Jerusalem. Ezra was one of the leaders that led the people back to Jerusalem after the declaration of King Cyrus according to the prophecy of Deutero-Isaiah 45. The return of Ezra has target reasons in Judea as authorized and support with the edit of the Persian empire. People faced many challenges after seventy years of captivity. Having settled down for just a little while, Ezra, who was regarded as the pioneer of Judaism started teaching the Torah, an action that led to Judaism and Deuteronomistic school. The post-exilic narration

of the intermarriage and segregation appeared in Ezra chapter 9 and 10. Specifically, Ezra 9: 2 and 12 reveals the verbal expression that indicated racial discrimination of the leaders:

(vs 2) “For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, **so that the holy seed is mixed with the peoples of those lands.** Indeed, the hand of the leaders and rulers has been foremost in this trespass.”

וְהִתְעַרְבוּ	זֶרַע	הַקֹּדֶשׁ	בְּעַמֵּי	הָאֲרָצוֹת
wə-hit-‘ā-rə-bū	ze-ra‘	haq-qō-dēš,	bə-‘am-mê	hā-’ă-
rā-šō-wt;				
<i>so that is mixed</i>	<i>seed</i>	<i>the holy</i>	<i>with the peoples</i>	<i>of</i>
<i>[those] lands</i>				

The noun קֹדֶשׁ (the holy) has a definite article qualifying it; meaning consecrated, dedicated, hallowed, holy or saint. The noun עַמֵּי (peoples) refers to the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. The noun אֲרָצוֹת (of [those] lands) means common or world. The word “common” is racial discrimination inclined. Good News Translation rendered Ezra 9: 2 thus: “and so God’s holy people had become contaminated.” and New Living Translation rendered same verse as “So the holy race has become polluted by these mixed marriages.” Does this verse (translation) imply that the common people contaminated or polluted the holy race? Did Rachab and Ruth contaminated or polluted the holy race? This position foreclosed any room for people outside the Jewish race getting any portion through intermarriage with the Jews.

It would become clear that in Acts 10, Peter was warned never to call what God has cleansed as common; could it be said that this was the genesis of the usage of the word ‘common’? To an Israelite, common means unclean; if the people of the land were common and unclean, what fascinated (attracted) the holy seed to an uncommon (unclean) race?

(vs 12) “Now therefore, do not give your daughters as wives for their sons, nor take their daughters to your sons; **and never seek their peace or prosperity,** that you may be strong and eat the good of the land, and leave it as an inheritance to your children forever.” [NKJV]

וְלֹא־ עוֹלָם	תִּדְרָשׁוּ tid-rə-šū	שְׁלֹמָם šə-lō-mām	וְטוֹבָתָם wə-ṭō-w-bā-tām	עַד־ 'ad-
<i>and never ever</i>	<i>seek</i>	<i>their peace</i>	<i>or prosperity</i>	<i>even to</i>

The imperfect verb תִּדְרָשׁוּ *tidresu*, meaning, *seek* means ask at all, care for, inquire, make inquisition, question, require, or search for. The nouns שְׁלֹמָם *salom, peace* and וְטוֹבָתָם *wetobtam*, meaning, *prosperity*, means friend, good health, rest, safety, welfare, or well-being and favour, good deed, pleasure, wealth, welfare or joy, respectively. This implies that the Israelites were never expected or permitted to develop any interest or friendship or familiarity with the Canaanites or other nations forever. This is a verbal expression of racial discrimination from Ezra.

Arguments could point to the fact that Ezra was making reference to Deuteronomy 23: 6; however, verses 2, 3, 7 and 8 must be taken into consideration alongside with the verse, which reads:

2One of illegitimate birth shall not enter the assembly of the Lord; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the Lord. 3An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the Lord; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the Lord forever... 6You shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all your days forever. 7You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother. You shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were an alien in his land. 8The children of the third generation born to them may enter the assembly of the Lord.

From the passage quoted above, it is evidently clear that Yahweh had no intention of disallowing the Edomites, Egyptians, Moabites and Ammonites from becoming close associates of the progeny of Jacob. The original intention of this verse was to sever any relationship between the Israelites and these nations at that time on the basis of idolatry and crude religion that manifested itself in lewdness and adultery

as well as punishing them for their idolatrous acts, self-centredness, adulterous incest and lack of hospitality in the spirit of brotherhood (cf. Gen 19: 30 -38; Num 25: 1-5; Deut 23: 4). Besides, Yahweh has providentially permitted the Ammonites, the Moabites, and the Egyptians access into the congregation of His people after the tenth generation (Deut 23: 2-3). Counting from Salmon, the husband of Rachab to Zerubbabel, Israel (the holy seed) and the common race has successfully recorded 20 generations (cf. Matt 1: 5-17). Thus, the Ammonites, the Moabites, and the Egyptians and by extension, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites and the Amorites have secured access among the Holy Seed as written in the law.

In addition, the law permitted intermarriage on some conditions as documented in Deuteronomy 21: 10-14:

When you go out to war against your enemies, and the Lord your God delivers them into your hand, and you take them captive, and you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and desire her and would take her for your wife, then you shall bring her home to your house, and she shall shave her head and trim her nails. She shall put off the clothes of her captivity, remain in your house, and mourn her father and her mother a full month; after that you may go in to her and be her husband, and she shall be your wife. And it shall be, if you have no delight in her, then you shall set her free, but you certainly shall not sell her for money; you shall not treat her brutally, because you have humbled her.

The approval observed in the above passage seems to be streamlined. It favoured women from other nations as against their men; likewise, a Jewish soldier seems to be at liberty to marry outside his tribe and nation if so desire but not without restraint and conditions. The captive must fulfill four conditions: one, shave her head, two, trim her nails, three, put off the captivity clothes and four mourn her parents for 30 days. These Deuteronomistic conditions serve to cut her off from the idolatrous background of her former nation, kindred and family ties and she became “proselytized” into the new race of the covenant people of God. This was done in token of her renouncing idolatry, and becoming a proselyte to the Jewish religion. The shaving of her head, the cutting of her nails, and the changing of her apparel, signified her putting off her former conversation, which was corrupt in her ignorance, that she might become a new creature. She must remain in his house to be taught the good knowledge of the Lord and the worship of Him: and the Jews say that if she refused, and continued obstinate in idolatry, he must not marry her (Henry, 2006). It is observed that the lady seems powerless being a captive; she has

lost all including her idol(s) and hence freed to be married to an Israelite. The point of emphasis here is that intermarriage may take place if idolatry is not in view. Besides, the law permits that she has time to bewail her father and mother, from whom she was separated, and without whose consent and blessing she is now likely to be married (Henry, 2006).

By this law, a soldier is allowed to marry his captive if he so pleased to do. For the hardness of their hearts Moses gave them this permission, lest, if they had not had liberty given them to marry such, they should have taken liberty to defile themselves with them, and by such wickedness the camp would have been become defiled and troubled with the wrath of Yahweh. The man is supposed to have a wife already, and to take this wife for a secondary wife, as the Jews called them. This indulgence of men's inordinate desires, in which their hearts walked after their eyes, is by no means agreeable to the law of Christ, which therefore in this respect, among others, far exceeds in glory the Law of Moses (Henry, 2006).

Ezra and Discrimination against Interracial Marriages

The Deuteronomists and the Chroniclers in the Deuteronomistic books in Hebrew sacred texts opposed the interracial marriages (cf. Deut. 7; 1 Kgs. 11; 16:23-35). The denunciation of the unnamed prophets against international marriage by Solomon readily comes to one's mind but David was spared of this in his time It was counted as one of the woes of both Israel and Judah and a factor that led to syncretic Yahwism and Baal worship. The goal of the Deuteronomists was pure Yahwism among the chosen race and avoidance of spiritual and religious pollutions in ancient Israel. The racial discrimination exercised by Ezra's team is uncalled for. Being an exposed Rabbi of the law, he ought to have applied the totality of the law and not to be lopsided in his judgment. Ezra was aware of the prophecy of Jeremiah (29:7): *And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace, you will have peace.*" Yahweh, who gave the precept of Deuteronomy 23: 6 has invalidated that statute and has ordained a new precept as announced by His mouthpiece, Jeremiah (cf. Heb 8:7). If Yahweh has made a provision for their enslavement by the Babylonians, He has requested them to seek the peace of Babylon, why not the peace of their immediate neighbours though marriage? Moreover, Ezra the priest had a robust relationship with Artaxerxes king of Persia. The king wrote in favour of the Israelites commanding neighbouring nations to support Ezra's vision (Ezra 7:21); and Ezra testified of Yahweh's kindness through the foreigners (Ezra 7: 28). Is it imaginable that Yahweh could extend goodness through a common race? Or does it mean that Artaxerxes king of Persia and his counsellors were part of the holy races? Is the

favour enjoyed from the Persians limited to the Persians and Israelites did not benefit from the favour?

In Exodus 34:15, Yahweh disapproves covenant relationship with the aliens in order to disallow idolatry; however, Joshua made a covenant with the Gibeonites (cf. Joshua 9). Yahweh neither crucified him nor requested him to break the covenant. Marriage vow is indeed a covenant till death; why did Ezra and his team break the intermarriage creeds? Whose precedence did he follow? If he were to break it because of the abominations, where are the desecrated cults occasioned by his reforms? Exodus 23: 24 discloses Yahweh's standing instruction as touching strange cults; post exilic leaders in their three-months reforms did not lead the returnees to a cult with the purpose of religious reformation (Ezra 10: 16-17) but led the 'holy race' who were attracted to the 'common race' to sign a covenant of divorce which Yahweh Himself hated (cf. Mal. 2:16).

In the Old Testament, a circumcised foreigner is permitted to eat the Passover (Exo. 12: 43-49). Thus, a foreigner who accepts Yahweh alone worship becomes a proselyte with an access to enjoy the commonwealth of Israel. Why is it that Ezra and his team did not organize a conversion program for all these foreign wives in order to make them become proselytes? Why did he not advocate that the strange wives pledge openly, an allegiance unto Yahweh alone worship and then denounce idol worship as long as they remain married to a Jew? Ezra's actions could best be considered as pure racial bigotry. Without doubt the influence of patriarchy and patriarchal domination in the garb of religious tent still dominated the action of Ezra and extremist "Jewism" as chosen race of Yahweh. The population of the people of Judah had reduced due to killings and flights to other nations during the Babylonian besiege of Jerusalem. The good women from Samaria, neighbouring Amorites, Canaanites, Edom, Egyptians, Jebusites, Hittites, Moab and Perizzites were spared by Yahweh since the conquest of Palestine and Yahweh has purpose for keeping them alive. Few men in Jerusalem and the surrounding cities in Judah needed to populate the land and keep their posterity for future sake. Getting married to the remaining few Jews in the land served this purpose of populating the land again after great loss to the infanticide, matricide and patricide they had suffered from the hands of the army of Babylonians.

At the same time, the basic need of women from Adam has been security and protection. The nations outside Judah also suffered the lots from the invasion of the Babylonian army and under the same depopulation, deportation, destruction and devastations. They all sought for basic social life revival and sustenance. Now, Ezra who enjoyed a royal treatment and honour in captivity demonstrated a little

insensitivity to the people he met in the land. Coming to the land after few months and not giving considerations to the plights of the people who were just coming up with social life and family and disorganizing them set them backward. These women were human beings under serious conditions of poverty, deprivation, economic hardship and little means of survival. Malachi the prophet ministered after the exile was a contemporary of Nehemiah and Ezra. Reference to Malachi 2:16 affirm that God hates divorce among the couples who have married themselves from the youth age. The lacuna on this submission is whether the atrocity was only among the Jewish couples or among the entire people in the Jewish society. Historically, the church has taken this biblical text as a polemic pronouncement against divorce among the saints as it is submitted from the biblical sacred texts. If Ezra was alive during the ministry of Malachi, he would not have opposed Malachi for this prophetic message from Yahweh he was jealous and zealous for in his contemporary time.

Ezra would have considered the married women as inferior on three major grounds. One, they were foreigners outside the Jewish race and were considered to be inferior to the Jews by covenant and religion. They were once condemned to death by the Torah, Pentatechal Traditions and some passages in the Deuteronomistic books. Two, the influence of patriarchal domination in the era would have influence him to take such a decision under the name of religion of the Jews and language. Three, rejection of foreign languages overshadowing the local language of the chosen race, which was not acceptable to Ezra. Ezra was local teacher of the Torah after the exilic period and he wanted to perpetrate the weapon of local language in teaching the people. If the personhood of the foreign women was rejected by Ezra, they must go with their languages from the Jews. Unfortunately, Ezra did not count the cost of single mother parenthood on the side of the women and the rejection of their children. This was painful!

The actions of Ezra and his Yahwist zeal only demonstrated attitude of men and masculinities toward intermarriage in the post exilic era (Cook, 2024). The Rabbinic approach to women in particular after the Babylonian exile continued the patriarchal dominance and dominations of the social life in ancient Israelite society. The objection to intermarriages with people of other nations in Judah and the call for the dissolution of such intermarriages foreign women and children demonstrate masculinities and power against women in ancient Israel. The rejection of the marriages and the call for the expulsion of the women and children are addressed as sites on which masculinities and power relations are configured (Cook, 2024). Here we see strict legalism and racism in Ezra 9-10 (Csilla, 2012). One wonders

how the same Creator would discriminate against other races, tongues, tribes, nations and people only in the name of marriage instead of idolatrous worship. Ezra showed that God is God of race and oppose finding marital rest for women from other nations without which, they could fulfill the mandate of Genesis 2:26-28.

Implications of Racial Discrimination and Marriage Dissolutions and Its Social Effects on Single Parenthood in Nigerian Society

Racism could have devastating effects on the lives of those targeted as victims. They can suffer its social, religious, physical, mental, financial and psychological consequences in addition to negative impacts on their working lives, finances and social connectedness. Racist incidents can have a negative impact not only on an individual who directly experience it, but also on the person's family or even the entire community. A close relative shared her experience in the hands of her in-laws due to the fact that she is from Yoruba land and her late husband was from the Benin. After the demise, she was not given any legacy left behind by her husband. To worsen the situations, she was accused of not given birth to any male child. Another racial discrimination incident was within the Yoruba race. The husband was from Ile-Ife while the wife was from Ekiti land. One of the sister in-laws insisted that her brother must marry a native wife from Ile-Ife and the first was eventually sent away. When crises ensued, the husband ended up marrying more the two wives.

One of the implications of racial discriminations and marriage dissolutions and its social effects on single parenthood in the Nigerian society is parting away from the first husband and first wife that had come together sharing their love with each other. Living with the children and catering for the children by the single mother is agonizing and traumatic. Social stigmatization and demands of time, nurturing and discipline required to care for male children in particular are negative effects of this social menace. An unpalatable feeling that one does not belong to a particular race within the same country, state or town and treatments from such in a crucial institution such as marriage is worrisome. The psychological effects of racism in marriage and resultant effects in single parenthood are uncalled for and so on.

Socio-Religious Effects of Jewish Particularistic Nature and Approach of Ezra against Racial Inter-marriage

Through this epochal action of Ezra and the Jewish leaders during the postexilic period of Ezra, they demonstrated an outrageous racism against other women who kept the social life of people of the going and populating the land. If Ezra had come and found no one in the land, who would he instruct with Torah, the Law. The

people of other races and tribes have positions in the Torah and access to worship Yahweh of Israel. Mosaic Law gave allowance for the gentiles who would want to abandon their gods and follow Yahweh. Ruth, a Moabitess, the wife and widow of Mahlon rejected idol worship and followed Yahweh (Ruth 1:1-18). She was counted as a great grandmother of Jesus Christ (Ruth 4:7-22; cf. Mat. 1:5-6). Moses got married to an Ethiopian woman and Yahweh did not object to this racial marriage. The socio-religious effects are the fact that this can lead to the rejection of Yahwism, monotheistic religion of Israel. The women abandoned could consider this: if Yahweh does not welcome me in the marriage of His people, why should I accept Him as my God and worship Him? This was not created by Yahweh but His religious agents. This is nothing but religious craftiness and racism created by Ezra. Quite a number of family members who discriminated against inter-tribal marriage have Christian affiliation.

Psychological Effects of Racial Discrimination

Social psychologists have examined extensively the effects of discrimination upon its victims. Multiple studies show that when people perceive themselves to be the targets of systematic discrimination as their physical and psychological health often suffer for this. Moreover, perceived discrimination both increases the likelihood of engaging in dangerous and unhealthy behaviours and decreases the likelihood of performing healthy behaviours (Pacoe & Richman, 2009). These effects are largely mediated by increased stress, and they have been found for a variety of ethnic groups including whites. Greater drug use among those perceiving discrimination is part of this process (Gibbons *et al.*, 2004). The married women who are asked to leave their matrimonial homes due to racial difference often feel not being recognized as full human beings and with no choice of who to marry. The fact that a married woman is from a south-western region of the country and the husband is from mid-west should not cause dissolution of the marriage. Some mother-in-laws always feel uncomfortable with the wives of their male on these cases. Some hinge this on the royal reasons in a situation where the husbands are from royal families. If the married women are not from the same towns, another way of ostracizing them is to get another wife for the man. Like ancient Ezra, they do not want the “holy seed” to be mingled with the “unholy seed” of women from another tribes. Hatred for a different tribe could be totally eradicated in this case. It is a social threat to the peaceful and happy homes that have enjoyed the marital bliss. Such threat can be stressful and hinder performance. It is triggered by situations that contain cues that make a negative stereotype salient.

Emotionally, racial discrimination and segregation has far reaching damaging effect on mental health. For instance, it may lead to distress, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), insomnia, depression, anxiety, fear, low self-esteem etc. Segregation occasioned by racial discrimination is humiliating; it dehumanizes and goes to the heart of identity and dignity. Furthermore, it may cause changes in behavioural attitude and future. This may further lead to suicidal attempts or suicide.

Racial Discrimination and Interracial Marriage Dissolutions: A Shortchange to the Women

Racial prejudices and systemic racial discrimination affect the wellbeing of the single mother parenthood in the Nigerian society by denying them equitable access to social services such as health, education, social protection, economic opportunities, justice, safety, and security they should enjoy in their matrimonial homes. If they all belong to the same large society or nation, there is established ground that they should suffer marriage dissolutions after they have mutually agreed to get married and they have actually married themselves on voluntary agreement. Someone who has been married is now sent packing and asked to return to her father's home bear the social shame and burdens of single mother parenthood. It is a social shortchange of their entitlement.

An Expression of Social Inequalities

Racial intermarriage dissolution is an open expression of inequalities among men and women in the Nigeria society. If the two are the same, why asking the woman to depart in the name of racial difference? The way married women are threat from the hands of some so-called in-laws shows that other married women are perceived as second-class citizens even in their matrimonial homes. If equalities are believed and practised, women from other tribes would not be forced out of their marriage and homes. It shows not care and concerns for marriage women but regarded as "vessels" to be used and probably discarded at any flimsy excuses in the garb of different race.

Lack of Trust and Dependence on Others

The Ezra induced segregation may lead to isolation and lack of trust in others. It is not impossible that some foreign spouses may feel reluctant to return back to their native land for fear or shame of rejection. This will have an effect on their social life. The recorded disconnection from a community where one was once loved and welcome creates the fear of engaging with strangers and fear of joining new groups or new communities. This might have been the experience or feelings of Lot and

his two daughters in Genesis 19: 17 – 23 when they planned incest with their own father. Racial dissection against intermarriage definitely has created lack of trust among some ethnic races in Nigeria and it is affecting the children of the progenitors. The Ijebu versus the Ekiti, The Egba versus the Ijebu, the Igbo and the Hausa among others still nurture fear of getting married to one another due to the past events. During the Ife and Modakeke tribal war in the 1997-2000 or so, there were cases of marriage dissolutions due to the war. As living witness of the crises, some marriages were dissolved as a result of lack of trust in one another.

Physical Effects of Racial Discrimination:

In the context of Ezra 9 and 10, physical injuries may occur as a result of physical fight or domestic violence. For instance, reactions by the in-laws of the segregated wife may lead to annoyance, transference of aggression, or physical assault. This action and reaction may lead to physical illness and mental ill health. There may be a loss of or damage to property occasioned by packing and movement of properties by either party. In the contemporary Nigerian experience, physical damages do occur when the intertribal marriages were dissolved due to discrimination against the women in particular. There were instances where some battering have occurred. A case of one woman could be sited: she was in her matrimonial home, a fight ensued between the husband and wife. In the course of fighting, the husband injured the woman with a blow that led to the damages to one of her eyes and she permanently lost the eye till date and the marriage was dissolved.

Medical Effects of Racial Discrimination against Intertribal Marriage:

Medically, the emotional effect of the separation caused by racial discrimination may result in sudden rise in blood pressure, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other medical complications. The stress may result into incurring medical bills, shock and eventually lead to premature death. Children are prone to some medical challenges due to the environment. Some fall into nostalgic feelings for their fathers when they do not see them around

Financial Effects of Racial Discrimination

The financial implication occasioned by the separation may ensue due to the cost of fixing lost property, damage property or its repairs. The costs of transporting properties in or out of Jerusalem are all inclusive. In addition, the cost of securing new accommodation as well transportation to new destinations is necessitated by the segregation. Single motherhood in the contemporary Nigerian society is a great financial burden. The mothers would love to have the children them and the law of

the land permits. Cases abound where many husbands violated the court order of making provisions for the children on motherly basis. The onus rests on the single mothers to fend for the feeding, clothing, school fees of the children after the intertribal marriage dissolutions. It is also important to note that there are chances that some segregated spouses have to change their employment, places of employment even lose their jobs due to this crisis.

Unwarranted Shame on the Single Mothers and Children

The social shame that a single mother is a divorcee in the neighbourhood, streets, social gatherings and assemblies is unbearable. The children in the schools often feel ashamed especially on the visiting days when both parents of other children are present and it is only the single mothers of the dissolved intertribal marriages are presents. We have witnessed cases of many of the children from such families felt ashamed or even burst into tears for the absence of their fathers when they saw the fathers of other children in school premises.

Effects of Racial Discrimination on Local and National Development

Human Rights Council (2021) published that racism and racial discrimination can affect vulnerable communities at both national and international levels. At a national level, racism fractures the social cohesion of the society and impacts the wellbeing of vulnerable groups. Discrimination based on local origin, ethnicity, or religion limits the freedom of individuals to emigrate and/or access better educational or economic opportunities outside their country homes.

Racial inequalities and disparities are evident in many developmental areas including access to quality education, employment, justice, health, housing, social security, access to political participation, access to basic needs such as food, safe drinking water, and equal protection against the ravages of climate disasters. An experience was recalled during the Ife-Modakeke intertribal war started. A couple from another state living in Modakeke has to change the address to Ile-Ife before the wife could receive prenatal treatment. Those indigenes of Modakeke could not access the medical care in the Teaching Hospital in Ile-Ife because of the war that affect every sector of the society.

The above findings are in line with the study of Andersen *et al.*, (2023). Their studies have shown that racism and discrimination are factors that affect health, and they negatively affect the marginalized peoples of the communities and their physical and mental health. Single mother parenthood in the selected texts and the contemporary Nigerian experience have shown no positive results to people that

were concerned. Institutional racism or system discrimination, including residential segregation, perpetuates detrimental health effects through unequal access to essential services and resources, such as employment, housing, and education, and exposure to environmental hazards. These effects manifest through biological mechanisms, such as epigenetic changes and psychological stressors. Furthermore, racism on an interpersonal level can manifest in both subtle ways, like micro-aggressions, and more overt forms, such as discriminatory hiring practices. All these forms of discrimination are harmful to an individual's health, especially for those from marginalized communities in the name of marriage.

Conclusion

This study, which examines Judah and racial discrimination in the context of Ezra 9 and 10, concludes that the marital segregation instigated by post exilic leaders spearheaded by Ezra was an exclusion case based on national prejudice. Their act was lopsided, categorically and waveringly unfounded in the Torah, which impaired the marital enjoyment of the foreigners. The thereby denied the women their marital, economic, personal, social and fundamental freedom to personal choice of their spouses with psychological inflictions, physical assaults, financial burdens, social stigma, religious intolerance, racial dissections, single parenting while once married, destiny setback, emotional traumas, and life time scars among others.

This social disorder in the name of race and language is usually perpetrated by the mother-in-laws, sister-in-laws and senior-brother-laws. It is recommended therefore that the prospective female singles who intend to marry from other tribes should propose solid agreement among the family members before they go into such lifelong enterprise. The prospective in-laws should also consider that they are dealing with human beings like them and not ordinary materials.

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