

In 2011, over 3000 youth were married in group weddings across Saudi Arabia, as observed by Dr. Nura Abdullahi who personally attended some of the ceremonies.

Despite all the wealth and affluence of Saudi Arabia, it is surprising that youths face a lot of problems concerning marriage. A spinster could reach the age of 30 to 40 or more without getting married. A lot of the youths have lost hope of ever getting married. According to Abdullahi there are lots of causes to this problem but the major one is the exorbitant cost of marriage, to the extent that a child born into a marriage could get into primary school without the father having completed payment of his mother's dowry. The minimum cost of a dowry is 50,000 Saudi riyals equivalent to over 4.8 million Nigerian Naira, and it can cost up to 100,000 Riyals equivalent to over 9.6 million Naira, then other expenses follow which might cost as much as the dowry. Then comes the renting of a house/apartment, car loan and honeymoon arrangement etc. All that notwithstanding, the stability of the marriage is not guaranteed.

Due to the negative effect of the problem, some non-governmental organizations and individuals in Saudi Arabia that are interested in uplifting the lives of families are striving hard to minimize the situation through different ways and means. One of these ways is carrying out group weddings and empowering the couples before, during and after the wedding to ease their situation. These group marriages can be classified into two, those that are: -

- ❖ Organized by families, tribes or communities of the youths, and those
- ❖ Organized by NGO's.

These NGOs started the gesture more than ten years ago and it has had tremendous effect so much so that more and more people are accepting the program even though it is alien to Arab culture. In June, 2011, more than 3,000 youths got married through the program.

According to Abdullahi, the referred marriages took place in Saudi Arabia as follows:-

- Friday 10/06/2011: pioneer wedding ceremony of 100 orphans under the auspices of the orphanage of INSAN in Riyadh.
- Wednesday 29/06/2011: 3rd wedding ceremonies of 1000 youths in MADINA under USRATY organization.
- Wednesday 22/06/2011: the 8th wedding ceremonies of eight hundred (800) youths in JIZAN marriage center.
- Saturday 25/06/2011: the wedding ceremonies of 200 youths at SHARQIYYAH under WI'AN center in DAMMAM.
- Sunday 26/06/2011: 9th wedding ceremonies of 200 youths at AHSA'A.
- Wednesday 29/06/2011: 12th wedding ceremonies of 1200 youths in JIDDAH under the auspices of MAWADDAH centre.

(The total number of youths married in groups in Saudi Arabia was 3500, all in June 2011).

The contributions given to these youths differ from town to town, likewise the couples. They included things like:

1. Sponsoring the wedding ceremony itself.
2. Cash donations ranging from 5,000 – 30,000 Riyals (480,000 – ₦2, 880, 000)
3. Furniture donations: - set of furniture (beds, sets of settee, wardrobes etc).
4. Electronics including air conditioners, refrigerators, washing machines, vacuum cleaners and electrical/gas cookers.
5. Gold jewelry sets for the brides.
6. Marriage programs that awarded certificates of attendance.
7. Assorted gifts which includes brand new cars, gold jewelries through lucky dip (raffle draw).

There are already set of NGO's criteria for eligibility for benefiting from the program.

For example: -

USRATY centre in Madina has the following criteria:

- That the groom should be an indigene of Madina or its surroundings.
- Should possess a court stamped marriage certificate of not more than one year.
- That the proposed dowry should not exceed 35,000 Riyals (3.360million Naira)
- Should have a means of sustenance and his monthly pay does not exceed 3,000 Riyals (288,000 Naira).
- Must have attended some of its marriage programs.

According to Abdullahi, who personally attended the last ceremony which took place in Madina, he and other invited guest were fascinated and highly impressed by Ustraty's organization.

The event took place at the indoor stadium of King Muhammad ibn Abdul-Azeez hall in Madina, while the venue was well decorated with different types/colours of lights including 31 traditional lanterns in remembrance of culture.

The grooms arrived at the venue in 10 luxurious buses after making a tour around the city of Madina. They were escorted by youths on motorbikes amidst music and singing. After offering the Isha' prayer, they walked into the venue in a happy, orderly manner each of them wearing a white gown with caps and turbans, and black head gears (Saudi style) with a cream-coloured elaborate shroud. The sultan of Madina, his highness Abdul- Azeez ibn Majid ibn Abdul- Azeez arrived the venue at exactly 10:08pm amidst praise singing. The ceremony started with the calling of Adhan of the prophet's mosque, and then the ceremony began.

The renowned lecturer and former Imam of the Masjid (mosque) DR. MUHAMMAD AYYUB opened the program with the recitation of the Holy Qur'an, reciting from the last part of Surah Al-Furqan. Thereafter, traditional singing and dancing took place while halation could be heard from the next room where the brides were. Then there was entertainment from different groups including the association of fishermen and also a magnificent fireworks display.

Thereafter, the secretary general of Ustraty centre which organized the wedding DR ABDUL-BARI ATTHUBAITY (an Imam of the prophet's mosque and also the chief judge in the high court of Madina) made his speech. He thanked Allah for enabling them to accomplish the program for their youths. He related the importance of such gesture in Islam and encouraged people to donate generously towards such venture. After that he thanked the law makers of the kingdom especially the Sultan of Madina, special guests and the chairman organizing committee of the centre for the cooperation, dedication and encouragement given to them, and all those who contributed through their suggestions, thoughts, cash donations, and well-wishers for just attending the occasion. The representative of HAADIYA ABDULLATEEF (a wealthy female donor) presented a speech on behalf of companies, organizations and individuals that gave contributions. The speech of King ABDALLAH was played where he offered a monthly allowance of 1,000 Riyals (N40, 000) monthly to all unemployed youths pending their getting employment. The ceremony continued with Saudi traditional dances of swords and sticks which were followed by raffle draw to win the following items:

- 3 brand new Hyundai cars 2011 models
- 10 sets of furniture.
- 5 gold jewelry sets.

The name of each groom was written on a piece of paper and placed in a transparent glass box, a young girl of about 6 years beautifully dressed in traditional attire was asked to pick one paper from the box of 500 names, take it to the presenter who opened it and read out the name of the winner of the first car. As soon as he was announced, he came forward and was given the key of the car by the Sultan, then she picks a second and he is given the next gift and so it continued until the last gift was given. Then a special gift was given to the father who accepted the least dowry of 10, 000 Riyals (430, 000) on behalf of his daughter. He was given the gift to encourage other parents to accept low dowries for their daughters' hand in marriage. The Saudi Telecommunication Company (STC) mobile phone company and the USRATY centre gave each of the couple's gifts which were not given at the venue. The Secretary General IMAM ATTHUBAITY in his speech mentioned that SAHIH AL-

RAJIHI center is sponsoring all the grooms and brides to perform this year's Hajj with an addition of 500 other couples. This gesture is in no way a small gesture because the total cost will amount to 7.5m Riyals (N322,500,000 million). If you know how difficult it is for youths in Saudia to perform Hajj, you will appreciate this opportunity offered to them, for many of them could not have been able to perform this obligatory act for many years to come.

The Sultan then presented gifts to companies and organizations and media houses that contributed to the success of the occasion. History was documented with group photographs with the Sultan and the secretary general and the grooms, dinner was served, and each groom went away with his bride.

In my conversation with the public relations officer of USRATY centre USTAZ NADIM BUKHSH, he Informed me that the total contribution the couples received was 6 million Riyals (N258, 000, 000) apart from the Hajj fare and money spent for the ceremony which amounted to 500, 000 Riyals (N21, 500, 000).

These events are highly publicized, often held in stadiums or public halls with participation from religious leaders, government officials, and media representatives. The communication process emphasizes collective identity, moral renewal, and social gratitude. Donors—including wealthy individuals and corporations—contribute financially or materially, often motivated by religious injunctions on charity (zakat) and social solidarity. The distribution of furniture, appliances, and even vehicles reflect the integration of faith, philanthropy, and public communication in fostering social welfare. Importantly, these weddings are preceded by educational seminars on marital responsibility, conflict resolution, and gender relations, thereby functioning as both ritual and pedagogy.

Group Marriage in Kano State, Nigeria

In Kano State, the Hisbah Board introduced group marriage in 2012 as part of its broader mission to uphold moral conduct and promote social harmony. Supported by the state government, religious leaders, and private donors, the initiative targeted low-income and unemployed youth who desired marriage but lacked financial capacity. The inaugural program married 200 couples, with subsequent events involving over a thousand participants across various local governments.

Each couple received support covering dowry payments, household items, and basic entrepreneurial training. The Hisbah Board also introduced a post-marital counseling and conflict mediation mechanism to minimize divorce rates. The inclusion of a few interested

Christian couples demonstrated an interfaith dimension to the program, enhancing communal coexistence. Media coverage within Kano portrayed the initiative as a moral reform effort and a social justice intervention.

In Kano State of Nigeria, the State Hisba Board was established in 1999 as a para-military group to assist in upholding the tenants of good deeds and discouraging the wrong-doings. It serves as a majlis (council) for settlements of disputes among families and civil matters; it also helps in maintaining law and order, control of traffic and always rushes to assist those in trouble or need. In the year 2012 the board adopted the idea of group marriage in order to help those that need to marry but do not have the means of meeting the financial commitments. The board started by marrying out 200 couples who were interviewed and screened for true commitments and good health status. Each couple was assisted with the payment of their dowries, were also given some house furniture and offered training for small scale crafts for self-sustenance. Various lectures and guidance on general and marital life was also given. The funding for the program largely came from Kano State government and other wealthy individuals who wish to support the program. The success of the first program led to replication and subsequent programs of different sets of group marriage graduations. The groups also include Muslim couples and few Christian couples who showed interest for their inclusion.

In Kano State the records stand as follows: -

1. 15/5/2012 100 couples
2. 15/7/2012 250 couples
3. 27/4/2013 1000 couples
4. 19/12/2013 1111 couples with 50 Christian couples' allocation.

However, only 19 Christian couples participated from the local governments of Rogo, Garko and Bebeji all in Kano State.

The gifts given out to the couples included Bed and beddings, sewing machines for the ladies, a dowry of N10,000=00 to each bride, a N20,000=00 financial assistance to each couple to enable them set up their own small-scale businesses. Each couple was given one 50 kg bag of parboiled rice, a carton of spaghetti, a carton of macaroni and a carton of cooking oil, containing six (5 litres) gallons. GSM Companies such as i-tel and Glo provided GSM phones, Sim packs, and N5000=00 to some couples and an opportunity to be a sales representative of the network's airtime cards. Kano Emirate Council gave a handsome donation while Nigerian Medical Association conducted free HIV and other medical tests required on all couples. Also, Yahuza suya, a poultry and meat business venture provided a special pack for each couple on the wedding night. Other individuals such as Alhaji Isyaku Rabi'u, a business tycoon in Kano paid the dowry of all the brides,

other donors such as Kwari traders association, Hajiya Mariya Dantata, Alh Ibrahim Babaye BBY, and many others contributed cash and materials including skill acquisition training, and tips on starting your own business.

The problem of divorce is tackled with an agreement of “no divorce” between the couples and that serious problems can be brought to the Hisbah Board for conflict resolution committee to discuss and resolve.

Presently various groups including His Highness the Emir of Kano Alhaji Muhammadu Sanusi II CON has proposed that government should enact a law on unnecessary divorces. Even if it were to happen all rights and privileges due to the woman must be met by the husband, according to the provisions of the tenants of Islamic religion and regulation laws.

The communicative aspect of Kano’s group marriage program lies in its public symbolism of collective care and faith-based development. Through sermons, radio broadcasts, and community engagement, the initiative reinforced Islamic teachings on modesty, charity, and cooperation. It also projected a counter-narrative to consumerist wedding trends, positioning simplicity and virtue as social ideals.

Discussion

The comparison between Saudi Arabia and Kano reveals both shared and context-specific communication logics. In both cases, group marriage operates as a community-based communication mechanism for transmitting values of generosity, modesty, and solidarity. By transforming marriage from an individual to a collective act, it redefines social participation and redistributes economic responsibility.

From a communication perspective, group marriage functions as a performative discourse—one that blends ritual, media representation, and participatory dialogue. The events themselves serve as mass-mediated spectacles that legitimize social reform while fostering belonging. They also act as informal educational campaigns that teach youth about marital obligations and responsible family life.

The Saudi experience highlights institutional organization and philanthropy rooted in religious ethics, while the Kano case illustrates localized faith-based governance and grassroots mobilization. Both reflect how communication channels, religious institutions, media outlets, and interpersonal networks—mediate social transformation. However, challenges persist: sustainability depends on continuous funding, transparency, and the avoidance of politicization or dependency.

Moreover, while group marriage reduces financial barriers, it should not substitute for long-term economic empowerment or gender equality efforts. Scholars argue that sustainable marriage systems require multidimensional support including employment

generation, legal protection for spouses, and post-marital education (Adebayo, 2022). Therefore, communication strategies should complement, not replace, broader social policy frameworks.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper demonstrates that group marriage is not only a socio-economic intervention but also a form of strategic social communication. In both Saudi Arabia and Kano, the initiative exemplifies how faith-based and community-driven communication can shape social norms, mobilize resources, and promote family stability. The collective nature of these programs reinforces shared responsibility and reduces inequality by making marriage accessible to marginalized youth.

The study recommends that governments, NGOs, and media organizations adopt participatory communication models in implementing similar initiatives. Continuous awareness campaigns, transparency in funding, and inclusion of pre- and post-marital counseling should be institutionalized. The media, in particular, should amplify the positive narratives of group marriage to counter societal pressure toward extravagant ceremonies.

Future research could explore audience reception of media coverage on group weddings and their long-term impact on family cohesion. Ultimately, group marriage represents a culturally adaptive and communicatively rich response to the socio-economic challenges of modern marriage systems.

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COMMUNICATION DYNAMICS AND MARITAL STABILITY IN KANO METROPOLIS: AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE ON CONTEMPORARY DIVORCE TRENDS

Binta Muhammad Lawal, PhD
Mass Communication Department
School of Management Studies,
Kano State Polytechnic, Kano

Abstract

This study examines the rising incidence of divorce in Kano State, Nigeria, in the 21st century, identifying communication barriers as a major contributing factor. It draws on Qur’anic injunctions, authentic Hadiths, and insights from both classical and contemporary Islamic scholarship to underscore the vital role of effective communication in sustaining marital harmony. The research reveals that socio-cultural expectations, rigid gender roles, and limited emotional literacy often hinder open and honest dialogue between spouses, frequently resulting in unresolved conflicts and eventual separation. Grounded in Islamic principles such as consultation (shūrā), mutual respect, and compassion, the study advocates for improved communication as a key solution to the growing trend of marital breakdowns in Kano. It offers practical recommendations for couples, religious leaders, and policymakers to foster and promote Islamic communication ethics within the institution of marriage.

Keywords: Communication, Marriage, Divorce, Islam, Qur’an, Sunnah, Gender Roles

Introduction

Divorce, though permissible in Islam, has become a growing concern due to its increasing prevalence in Kano State, a predominantly Muslim region. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said, “*The most detested of permissible things to Allah is divorce*” (Abu Dawud, Hadith 2178). While economic hardship and societal changes contribute to the rising divorce rates, communication breakdown remains a subtle yet critical factor. This paper examines the role of communication barriers in marital relationships within Kano and argues that a return to Islamic principles of effective communication can help curb the escalating trend of divorce.

Marriage and Divorce in Islam

Marriage in Islam is conceived as a sacred covenant (*mīthāq ghalīz*) anchored in affection (*mawadda*), mercy (*raḥma*), and emotional tranquility (*sukūn*). Allah says in Qur'an 30:21. "And among His signs is that He created for you from yourselves spouses that you may find tranquility in them, and He placed between you affection and mercy".

Marriage serves not only as a personal union but also as a social institution aimed at stability and moral order. Although divorce is legally permissible in Islam, it is treated as a measure of last resort. The Qur'an emphasizes reconciliation and conflict resolution through consultation, dialogue, and family-based mediation, as prescribed in Qur'an, "And if you fear dissension between the two (Married Couple), appoint an arbitrator from his people and an arbitrator from her people. If they both desire reconciliation, Allah will cause it between them" (4:35).

Collectively, these principles as seen in the two verses above underscore communication, mutual responsibility, and structured mediation rooted in dialogue, mutual understanding, and third-party intervention—as foundational Islamic approaches to managing marital conflict and preserving family cohesion.

Divorce Trends in Kano in Relation to Communication Barriers

Statistics from the Kano State Hisbah Board (2023) indicate that an alarming percentage of first marriages in urban centers end in divorce within the first five years. Cultural practices such as early and arranged marriages without premarital counseling, along with evolving gender expectations, contribute to rising conflicts. Communication failure manifested in silence, verbal abuse, misunderstanding, and emotional neglect is frequently cited as a precipitating factor (Yusuf & Ibrahim, 2021).

Reports from the Kano Hisbah Board reveals that Kano State is experiencing an alarming rate of divorce, making it one of the highest in Nigeria, the reports also indicates that over 80,000 divorce cases were recorded between 2020 and 2021 alone. A 2022 BBC investigation further found that approximately 32% of marriages in Kano dissolve within three to six months. In many cases, individuals between the ages of 20 and 25 have experienced as many as three marriages. This trend highlights a disturbing pattern of unstable marital unions, often initiated without adequate communication or emotional preparedness.

A significant factor contributing to the rising divorce rates in Kano State is the prevalence of communication barriers between spouses. Cultural norms that discourage open emotional expression particularly among men often lead to misunderstandings and the escalation of conflicts. Additionally, the persistence of forced and early marriages in the