

Causes of Divorce based on lived experience of divorced persons in Lusaka, Zambia.

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ABSTRACT

This study was based on the findings of the research on lived experiences of divorced persons on lifelong learning counselling issues in Lusaka district. The study focused on the first objective of the study which was to identify causes of divorce in marriage. The study reviewed the causes of divorce based on the lived experiences of the participants who were actually living a divorced life.

Keywords: Divorce, divorced persons, Lived Experiences

INTRODUCTION

Globalization has come with economic, social, political, educational and family dynamics. Under family dynamics researchers have observed that the rates of divorce have been increasing. According to Ngambi (2023), divorce seems to be providing an inevitable family transition of many lives. Ngambi (2023) explained that dramatic change in family life during the 20th Century in the world was the sharp increase in the rate of divorce, resulting into about 40 percent of children in the world faced with likelihood of experiencing effects of divorce before their adulthood. Research undertaken by numerous scholars focuses so much on causes of divorce (Ndhlovu, Walusiku and Ng'ambi, 2023). However little is discussed on causes of divorce based on lived experiences of divorced persons. It is against this knowledge gap that this research paper interviewed divorced persons in order to obtain knowledge on lived experiences of divorcees on the causes of divorce.

The Concept of Divorce

The concept divorce comes from the Latin word 'divortium,' which means separation. It is also equivalent to the word 'divort' or 'divortere.' 'Di' means apart and 'vertere' means to turn to different ways. Mohanty and Ayarzagotia (2020) attempt to give an understanding of what divorce is when they look at it as the court judgment ending a marriage, where the court requires a legal reason for the divorce. Mohanty and Ayarzagotia add that to the legally ending of the marriage, the court looks at other issues which need to be decided before the divorce becomes final. However, it should be noted that not all couples would want to end their marriage using the court of law; there are other ways of dissolving the matrimony outside the court.

It is also important to make mention of the fact that divorce is not an event, but rather a process. In view of this Amato (2000) pointed out that the process of completely integrating the fact that one is divorced into all areas of life takes about 2 years, regardless of how long the marriage lasted. And Mary (n.d) guides the manner in which the separation should occur by giving the following procedure: making a decision to divorce, announcing, breaking the nuclear family, the binocular family, and aftermath. Further, it can be noted that divorce is unpleasant separation of a man and woman who have been in a marriage relationship.

IRRETRIEVABLE BREAKDOWN THEORY OF MARRIAGE

This study has employed the irretrievable breakdown theory of divorce. According to Ayarzagotia and Mohanty (2020:5), “The basic postulate of breakdown theory is that if a marriage had broken down without any possibility of repair (or irretrievably), then it should be dissolved, without looking to the fault of either party.” The breakdown theory holds the view that “what we are concerned with is the fact of breakdown of marriage; if a marriage has broken down irretrievably, and then divorce should be granted, as there is no use in retaining the empty shell.” Ojha and Dabral (2018) guide that this theory implies the couple can never again live respectively as man and spouse; the two accomplices, and one accomplice, must demonstrate to the court that the marriage separated so gravely that there is no sensible shot of getting back together.

Though marriage is considered so sacred and indissoluble in some cultures, this theory states that marriage can get irreparable completely to the point where the spouses cannot live peacefully with each other and there is no choice left for them other than to dissolve the marriage (Medha, 2022).

This means that at this point, divorce becomes a solution in the sense that if the two continue to live together, something worse than divorce might happen as the couple might be subjected to arguing, fighting and all sorts of gender based violence. That is why if you take the matter to the courts of law, the court recognizes an unhappy situation and says to the petitioner: “If you can satisfy the court that your marriage has broken down irretrievably, and that you desire to terminate a situation that has become intolerable to you, then your marriage shall be dissolved whatever may be the cause” (Ayarzagotia & Mohanty, 2020). Thus, Singh (2021:7) alludes that “Under this theory, law realizes a condition and suggests to the doomed couple that if they can please the Court that their marriage has broken down, and that they plea to terminate a scenario that has become intolerable, then marriage shall be liquefied, anything may be the reason.”

It must, however, be mentioned that irretrievable breakdown of marriage is still not considered to be a sufficient reason for divorce. But while hearing the case and taking the evidence into consideration, it is the discretion of the court whether to consider this irretrievable breakdown as a ground for divorce or not. Even then, the decree of divorce cannot be accorded on the sole basis of irretrievable breakdown; it must be accompanied by other grounds that are specifically mentioned in the statute (Singh, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

Marriage is a lifelong relationship and commitment which has been threatened and invaded by divorce. Zambia recorded 28,001 divorce cases in 2017 due to various reasons among them was inadequate marriage counselling lessons for couples (Zambia Daily Mail, 28th August, 2017). The question that needed an answer was **based on lived experiences of divorced persons, what are the causes of divorce?** There was need, therefore, to explore lived experiences of divorced persons on what causes divorce.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study was to identify causes of divorce in marriage.

Methodology

This study used a phenomenological research design. Purposive sampling was used to specifically select divorced persons with required information. The total population included all divorced persons in Lusaka district. The sample of Ten (10) respondents was selected using linier purposive sampling. The data collection method was interviews and the data collection instrument was interview guide and data was analysed thematically.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Infidelity

This research has reviewed that infidelity was the major cause of divorce, and that it actually gave birth to physical and psychological torture to the affected couples. This is in line with the research conducted by Harmsworth and Minnis (1955) focused on non-statutory causes of divorce and the lawyer's point of view. This study brought to light the fact that adultery or infidelity received the highest overall score as a cause of divorce compared to the other factors. Infidelity is an action where one or both of the married partners begin to have an extra marital affair with a different person of the opposite sex. Infidelity in the research was committed by both male and female partners, and this action led to divorce. In the same vein Scott (2013) research showed that the second highest in the ranking of contributing factors to divorce was *infidelity*, endorsed by 59.6% of respondents, and by at least one partner in 88.8% of couples. Of those couples who had a least one partner report infidelity as a reason for divorce, only 31.3% represented couples in which both partners agreed that infidelity was a major contributor to the dissolution of their marriage. Thus, the majority of couples with apparent infidelity in their relationships only had one partner mention it as a contributing factor to their divorce. Overall, infidelity was often cited as a critical turning point in a deteriorating relationship.

The respondents explained that they tried to fight for their marriages but the infidelity of either their husband or wife made them lose hope. This is concretized by Hill and Kopp (2015), who added that infidelity was the major cited reason among couples that divorced as the main contributory factors to ending a marriage. One respondent explained that the husband would say he had gone for business but it was not true. He had actually gone to marry and even had two children. When his wife tried to question the husband's actions, it led to physical abuse, hence the female respondent had to let the marriage go in avoidance of physical abuse, mental abuse as well as fear of being sick with sexually transmitted diseases due to the husband's infidelity.

Most of the women explained that they had to leave their marriages due to infidelity because it made them feel like the man did not belong to them, and that the property they worked so hard for would be divided amongst the other outside children which they felt would not be fair on their children considering the fact that outside children would benefit from both their mother and father who is a married man. But for the married women, their children would lose out on the hard work of the mother who is considered to be one with the cheating husband who has to share the marital hard work with the side chick's children.

One married women respondent stated:

My husband had many women in his life. He ended up making one of them pregnant. This is what caused me to request for a separation, and that is how the marriage came to an end. My mother in-law accepted and embraced the other woman even before I left my matrimonial home."

Another woman respondent explained that her husband committed adultery with her sister's child (niece). She explained that she got him arrested for sleeping with the niece and later left the marriage.

Something that came out different from this research is the fact that other respondents were being accused that they were committing adultery when in the actual fact they were not. One male respondent stated:

An accusing finger caused divorce where someone thinks you are cheating when you are not. I was raised by a pastor who taught me not to cheat, hence this accusing finger used to hurt me. Negative suspicions are not right because when you keep talking about it, you keep building negative thoughts in an innocent mind.

The data collected from divorced persons indicated that more accusations of a spouse having an extra marital affair indeed led to unnecessary suspicions and misunderstanding. One female respondent explained that her husband suspected her of having a boyfriend, and this man began to inform other people that the wife was promiscuous and that she had a boyfriend. The husband reached the extent of sending the mother in-law a message that her daughter was promiscuous and that he was going to divorce her. The respondent further explained that this led her to having a heart break and the realization that the husband was no longer a shield of her life due to the fact that he did not have a proof of her cheating on him, but went on and carried a story and began to tell people in their church and family circles.

The respondent further narrated that due to the husband's suspicions, he began to go through her phone when she was asleep, and began to be extremely abusive verbally and physically. These happenings led to a woman respondent in losing the faith and love that she had for her husband. She stated that her sexual drive, the desire to be home with the husband and children was all gone. She lamented on acquiring the feeling of shame because as she moved around, she felt everybody took her husband's accusations as gospel truth, and she was not there to defend herself.

In the same vain, male respondents complained of their wives having extra marital affairs. One of the respondents had this to say:

Three years in our marriage, my wife started cheating with another man. Most of the times she would lie to be at church, meanwhile she would be at the lodge with her lover.

Another male respondent narrated:

My wife had extra marital affairs, and even her family could support her affairs. She defiled our matrimonial bed by bringing a man when I am out for work as a business man. We had a child who was too young by that time – about four months, but my wife needed sex on a daily basis. When I reminded her about the child's health, she never considered but only thought of herself. Eventually, my wife's desire for sex increased and the child's health was affected badly. I invited counselors and explained to them my wife's behaviour. I also explained my reasons of not giving her the sex she wanted. They counseled us, and told us when to have effective sex. All this was nothing to her for she never listened to the counsel given. The same ubuchende she involved herself in, she ended up being pregnant for the same man she was going out with.

The aforementioned findings are crowned by D'Onofrio (2011) who explains that infidelity causes divorces among couples. D'Onofrio attributes to the cheating among couples as a serious cause of divorce. He further explains that only a few couples opted to remain in marriage despite their cheating spouses

The above response by the respondent, seems as though he was denying the woman sex due to traditions that when a baby is little and unwell, the couple must avoid having sexual relations. This is not the right way to go about it due to the fact that human beings are different; not everyone has the capacity to hold their desire until a stipulated time.

The lesson drawn from this respondent is that distant relationships are not the best because one may get starved of sex and may end up having an extra marital affair. There is need to have a strategy that the couple meet more often if they work in different places or towns to avoid extra marital affairs.

Data collected from the male respondent indicated that their wives were denying them conjugal rights, and all of them claimed that this denial led them to find another woman to provide this physiological need of sex as explained by Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Below are some exact explanation given by male respondents:

What caused my cheating in the first place is that my wife never used to give me sex no matter how much I demanded. I involved several counselors on this matter but all to no avail. I provided everything home but still she cheated on me and refused to have sex with me.

The other respondent explained:

My wife never used to give me sex, therefore, I had to improvise by finding a new girlfriend. Note that I was not providing for the family, and I never used to mistreat her for she was my wife. But even if I did all good things to her, she never gave me sex.

Contrary to men's perspective, the woman respondent explained that they failed to give their bodies to their husbands due to being abused physically, verbally and psychologically. This research revealed most men did not understand how to take care or rather manage the emotions of their wives.

Sex is said to start with what you do and say to the woman before the actual act. The women lamented that their previous husbands had not learnt this art. They expected them to have sex before resolving issues. One woman stated:

I tried to give my husband sex even when he mistreated me. I tried to bring about peace and get a chance to talk about issues later but this did not help. After the sex, if I tried to bring up what did not make me happy, I was even disrespected and insulted further.

Women respondent stated that sex was more pleasurable and enjoyable when other issues were cleared and sorted out, and not left hanging.

From the responses, it was deducted that infidelity is the real killer of marriages and has to be studied independently, and solutions have to be found to eliminate it completely due to the fact that divorce has deadly negative effects on the couple and their children.

LACK OF MARITAL AFFECTION

Women and men respondents alluded to the fact that their marriages came to an end because of lack of marital affection. One of the female respondents stated:

My husband made a decision to leave and explained that he did not love me anymore. I requested for an official divorce paper from the courts of law but he refused and continued torturing me, hence the decision to separate completely since he had already left.

According to Scott (2013) the lack of affection is usually the effects of infidelity, frigidity in women, lack of an erection in men (sexual dysfunction), conflicts and arguments, substance abuse, physical abuse, psychological abuse and the lack of effective skills in conflict management.

Lack of trust by women caused their former husbands to lose affection and love, and this research reported that lack of trust by their wives caused them to just lose the love drive they had for their wives. Abdulgaffar, Arikewuyo, Eluwole and Ozad (2021:350) attempt to give the rationale for trust in marriage: "Trust may be the single most important ingredient for the development and maintenance of happy, well-functioning relationships."

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL ABUSE

With regards to physical and mental abuse, the respondents explained that it was among the major causes of divorce. A pattern was noticed that abuse of alcohol led to physical and mental abuse of the other partner who was not a drunkard or abuser of any drug.

Apart from drunkenness, physical abuse seemed to emerge due to extra marital affairs especially when women attempted to question their husbands. This ended in physical and mental abuse.

One female respondent explained:

When my husband was drunk, anything I said or did made him angry and led him to begin to physically abuse me. This made me to run away from my marriage in order to save my life.

Tembe (2010) is in support of the findings that abuse of women was a common cause of divorce. Women abuse manifested in different forms such as physical, emotional or mental abuse. Tembe discovered that Christian men abuse their wives both physically and emotionally. Others believe that women are children that need to be beaten when their behaviors are deviant. This research finding is shocking because it is expected of Christian believing men to live like Christ and to follow what the Bible stipulates.

In the same vain, a male respondent stated:

My wife was someone who never used to understand. I remember one time she needed money for her hair, at the same time we needed to pay school fees for our child and that was the only money we had home by then. I told her to wait we first sort out school fees for the child but she could not listen to me. Instead, she behaved like someone possessed by an evil spirit. She jumped on me and started throwing punches on my face. The time I realized what was happening, I found myself bleeding badly, only to be rescued by my sister in-law whom we were keeping then. I never punched her back fearing to be arrested for Gender Based Violence. When I thought twice about what happened, I thought better we part ways least she kills me next time.

This is in agreement with Eyo (2016) who enlightens on the fact that domestic and gender violence accounts for some of the divorce cases. Especially in situations where, violence is inflicted on the woman in marriage by either the spouse or in-laws, it may lead to divorce, especially in this age of gender equality and equity. This domestic violence can be expressed in different forms such as physical, sexual, verbal, economic and emotional violence.

Note that physical abuse and mental abuse emerged even in unexpected circumstances than discussed.

Some respondents mentioned to say, they were puzzled on how their partners began to beat them up and use very abusive language and lashing insults on them. They explained that the abuse seemed to have no genesis of any misunderstanding, alcohol abuse or even tense and unpleasant discussions between the couple. Some respondents assumed that the physical and mental torture they went through which had no source was a spiritual issue. They believed that abusive behaviour was driven by evil powers and that their partners needed to be freed from such abusive and unreasonable behaviour but the freeing process never took place, hence the dissolution of their marriages. Similarly in *Scott research of (2013)*, domestic violence was cited as a contributing factor to divorce by 23.5% of participants and by at least one partner from 27.8% of couples. Of those couples in which one partner listed domestic abuse a major contributor to divorce, 40.0% of partners agreed that domestic violence was a major contributor to divorce. Elaborations of domestic violence included descriptions of both physical and emotional abuse. *Scott research* participants explained

how the abuse in their relationship developed gradually, with intensified cycles of abuse and contrition, until the severity of the abuse intensified to insurmountable levels. Some respondents stated that there was continuous sexual abuse and emotional trauma which lead both to physical and mental un-wellness on the affected partner. Some responders revealed that efforts made to change the abuse behaviors of their partner did not yield positive results hence the divorce.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND ADDICTION

Information collected from the female and male respondents indicated that substance abuse and addiction led to the crumbling of their marriages. And this appears to show agreement with Couple Family Psychol (2013) findings that were established from a study where 52 divorced individuals who received the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) while engaged to be married were interviewed, and it was discovered that most common “final straw” reasons were infidelity, domestic violence, and substance use. Ronald (n.d) appears to share this position as he reports: “Individuals frequently point to alcohol and drug use as being a prominent reason for the dissolution of their marriage. In fact, alcohol and drug use ranked third — just below infidelity and incompatibility as a reason for divorce.”

The abuse of drug and alcohol addictions leads to financial struggles in the marriage due to the fact that either of the spouses begins to neglect financial responsibilities and use available recourse to obtain drugs and alcohol in order to satisfy individual cravings at an expense of marital responsibility like provision of school fees for children, food and groceries, payment of bills like water and electricity. Such financial inadequacies are a resultant of drug and alcohol abuse and have led to divorce.

One respondent who was female explained that her husband’s drunkenness caused him to lose understanding. He could sleep around with other women and used very bad language. Such behaviour puts husbands and wives health at risk as confirmed by Hall, Stewart and Fincham (2008) who observe that wives of alcoholic men are unknowingly placed at risk for indirect exposure to STIs as a result of their husbands’ sexual risk behaviors. Thus, infidelity in treatment-seeking alcohol-abusing men represents a significant public health issue.

Indeed, infidelity is a common norm among married couples that tend to drink just like this research reviews. As a result, couples opt to divorce their spouses especially if one is not drinking. Other females explained that their husbands drunk too much of the alcohol that they had to be brought home by friends even unknown people.

In the same vain, male respondents had some complaints about their wives when it came to the abuse of alcohol. Men explained that their ex-wives drunk alcohol to the extent of forgetting that they were individual’s wives and found themselves in extra marital affairs, neglecting home duties and responsibilities. This behaviour caused divorce.

And the literature review indicates that consequences of alcohol in marriage are multiple and disastrous. In a study that sought to explore the experiences of women who lived through at-risk households after being married to a drug addict, total of ten women were selected as informants, and it was discovered that their experience in their early phase had shown all informants often beaten by the husband, worried about their personal safety due to husband behaviour who is involved in other crimes, dual-burden as the husband does not provide any basic need in the household, and feeling uncomfortable during sexual intercourse due to husband forced and rough behaviour (Zakaria & Ibrahim, 2022)

To further concretize on the findings of substance abuse as a cause of divorce Scott et al (2013) research

discovered that *Substance abuse* was reported as a major contributing factor to the increasing rates of divorce by 34.6% of participants, and by at least one partner in 50% of couples spoken to. Of these couples, only 33.3% of partners agreed that substance abuse was a major contributing factor to divorce. The majority of couples who listed substance abuse as a reason for divorce had only one partner cite this reason. Generally, Scott and friends research participants expressed that the severity of the substance abuse problem in their relationship was either minimized over the duration of the relationship, or if attempts to address the problem were made, the partner with the substance abuse problem would not improve and/or seek council. After several attempts to address the problem, the relationship finally ended. This is common in most divorce cases where the partner with an issue affecting the marriage is not committed to change.

FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

Financial challenges led to a number of divorces. Women respondents explained that their husbands were in the habit of not saving. Some women noted that their husbands who were involved in extra marital affairs had to split the resources between their home and the other woman. In some cases, this caused a lot of tension in the home, and divorce was the only way out. These findings are in agreement with Tembe (2010) who explains that financial problems are birthed in a marriage when a husband is involved in extra marital affairs and when there is lack of transparency on how money is being spent. Financial challenges in a marriage have emerged because of lack of contentment which has led husband or wife being involved in dubious activities like drug trafficking and other strange activities that have brought shame on the marriage union and lead to divorce

On the other hand, male respondents noticed that their wives were not willing to share their monies or put monies to work together as a team in the marriage. It is like a saying: “A man’s money is our money; it belongs to the family. But a woman’s money is her own money, she can use it for what she wants and however she wills.”

One male respondent had this to say:

I was taught to work together financially but my wife believed that her money was hers alone and not for the family. At that time my salary was ZMW704.00 (seven hundred and four kwacha).

This respondent continued the narration:

My wife got loans without the consent of me as the husband. She bought a car without my consent and kept on showing off that it was her money.

Further other men respondents mentioned that their wives would demand for money that they did not have and could not be able to give that money. This led to their leaving them because they did not have enough money to meet the higher demands of their ex-wives. Just like Yakymchuk et al (2021) noted that Economic stress increases the likelihood of family disagreements. Couples may experience anger, frustration, depression, and often argue over money; they become estranged, offer less emotional support and care. As the stress response deepens, conflicts begin to be accompanied by criticism, blaming, aggression, which further reduces satisfaction in the relationship.

Couples who do not see eye to eye on spending habits or couples where one spouse has and controls the finances of the home can face marital strain that can conclude in divorce.

One male respondent who had lost his job stated:

When money became an issue in our home, she started mistreating me and never regarded me as her husband.

This finding is supported by Kalmijn (2005) whose research saw that the risk of divorce increased due to household low income and men's unemployment or have unstable incomes

These finding teaches us that a husband's loss of a job can lead to divorce but not a wife's loss of a job. This may be due to the African traditional belief that no matter what happens, a man must be the one providing. But with the changing economic dynamics, this kind of belief has to be eliminated. We have seen with the coming in of the global village and globalization that it is possible for a man to be without employment for a long period while the wife has one, hence women's attitude must be that of team work, that every money made in the marriage is for both male and female spouse or family at large.

POOR COMMUNICATION

Data collected from women respondents showed that they were disrespected by their husbands' bad language towards them during communication. All the divorced women explained that they were affected by the insults they received while talking to their husbands. Others stated that their husbands were not communicating fully, and sometimes they would hide very important information from them as wives.

Poor communication emerged between the couples when instructing the children. One male respondent narrated,

"I was instructing children, for example, not to watch TV after school, but ensure they eat, clean uniforms, attend to their homework and watch TV for an hour, and then return to bed early so that they are not late for school the following morning. But she would suggest that I am being difficult, and told the children that as a father, I hated them, when it was a measure of discipline."

This type of communication confuses the children because they did not know who to follow as they love both their parents. To the couple, this is so damaging because the man feels undermined. Thus, Osakinle and Okafor (2013:302), observed that "Lack of effective communication affects the whole personality of the human being: personal, professional and social life. If partners do not communicate effectively, they are subjected to loneliness and isolation which might make them withdraws from social activities."

This couple clearly did not agree on the culture, rules and regulation they were going to follow as a family and how they were going to raise the children hence the misunderstanding that caused the man to feel disrespected and consider this feeling of disrespect as one of the reasons for the dissolution of the marriage. This is purely an educational point. Couples who are yet to get married should come up with a set of rules and regulation that their future children will be guided with. There has to be a consensus on these agreed upon rules and regulation and both partners have to be happy with them such that when the children are being born there is readily available culture they adopt this will eliminated unnecessary misunderstandings and further prevent divorce from emerging as seen from the findings.

Male respondents further complained of wives doing things like borrowing money or clothes, and getting loans without informing their husband. This was so frustrating for the men folk in the marriage. The normal way of doing things, however, should be such that the couples ought to be doing things together, planning together, and be accountable to each other.

Other men as well as women felt like their spouses twisted their word and gave it a negative meaning in the communication process when they meant well in the communication.

Male respondents complained of their wives being naggers. Their wives nagged them to the point of insulting them and their families. Males cried out of their wives misunderstanding them and not communicating to them effectively so they could understand. Divorcees confessed that they had no time to

talk about the problems they faced and men said that wives were too pompous to listen. And this is so crucial that Oguchi, Ajike and Ajaegbu (2015:) noted that: “Communication Breakdown Has Been Identified As One Of The Chief Causes Of Marital Conflicts.”

LACK OF CONFIDENTIALITY

On lack of confidentiality, the male respondents complained that their wives did not keep the marital challenges they went through as a couple. They shared confidential information with friends, family and even neighbors. This brought frustration to the male and led to divorce.

A male respondent stated:

She involved her friends. This lack of confidentiality on marital dispute caused her friend to be coming as part of the individual to resolve the problem, but she ended up mocking me as the husband, and this led to divorce. The man alluded:

She never kept any bedroom issues confidentially. She could tell anyone. Even the neighbours could know that I refused her sex on that particular day. Talking about friends, everyone knew our differences, bedroom issues inclusive.

Further, another male respondent explained that his wife ensured that whenever they had a marital dispute, frustration the ex-wife threatened divorce.

The male respondent further explained that most women who were their former wives talked anyhow without thinking of the negative effects on marriage. One male lamented, “*She never knew how to keep marital secrets – inkama shakukati.*”

The above finding detected that men felt embarrassed as their women took out marital conflicts to begin to share with friends and family. Men further felt degraded as if they were not able to sort out their own issues and manage their home, for men such scenarios made them feel as though they lacked leadership skills, they ended up losing their self-esteem and pride as men and resulted to divorce.

In this research women never spoke about the lack of confidentiality of their former husband but as a researcher, I believe that the feeling of the women will be similar to those of men when confidentiality of marital conflict is bridged. The lesson to take home is that what happens in a marriage is better off solved and worked on by the two people involved in that marriage. Both the wife and husband must protect each other in terms of what information they share about their marriage to outsiders. And Jackson (2016) explains that the disclosure of private information, including secrets, is an inherently vulnerable process; and when an individual makes the decision to disclose a piece of personal information, he or she has no way of predicting how the recipient of the disclosure will react.

LACK OF RESPECT/ UN-SUBMISSIVENESS

The findings from this research showed that lack of respect by both the men and women led to dissolution of marriages. According to the Bible in the book of Ephesians 5: 21 the Bible encourages the husband and the wife to submit to one another out of reverence to God and Christ Jesus. Later in verses 22 to 23 the bible encourages wife to submit only to their husband due to the fact that no relationship or organization can have two leaders at a goal.

The men declared lack of respect when their wives did not follow the instructions by not doing exactly what

their husbands had told them to do. Men also felt disrespected when women did things without discussing them as a couple so that as heads of the home they add their opinion. When denied sex, men also felt greatly disrespected and humiliated.

Equally, women felt disrespected when men did not disclose the amount of money they were making, and were not willing to be open on financial issues. Women felt disrespected when men made decisions against their will and without any discussion or dialogue between the couple. Women felt disrespected when their husbands walked out on them in the middle of the conversation, worse off if they were insulted or talked down on during the conversation.

The lesson to be learnt from these finding is that disrespect is very dangerous and it has no respecter of gender- whether male or female, the feeling of being disrespected is the same and causes divorce. Thus, Alao (2006:317) guides: “For any relationship to succeed, the two partners need to view each other as a person of worth; the male partner especially must like the female partner as she is; her rights need to be respected. And Smith (2023) adds that in a relationship where both partners respect each other, they are able to communicate openly and effectively, resolve conflicts in a constructive manner, and support each other in their personal and professional growth. As a matter of truth, without mutual respect, trust and intimacy can easily erode, leading to a breakdown in the relationship.

FAMILY AND FRIENDS INTERFERENCE

The findings of the study indicate that both women and men lamented over family and friends interference as what led to their divorce. Female respondents in particular explained that their mother-in-law’s never approved of them as a wife to their son. Some mother-in-laws could actually show the dislike openly and say painful words. Women further complained of their mother-in-laws actually accepting the side chicks of their sons to a point of keeping them and even taking care of grandchildren from another woman. Some behavoiur broke and defeated the women who were married to their sons, and this narrated situation caused divorce (Sheykhi, 1999). This is supported by Olaninyi (2015) who states that mother in-law interference as the major cause of divorce. Sometimes it’s either wife or husbands who fail to leave their families completely and unite with their partner.

On the same wavelength, male respondents complained of friend’s interference. They narrated that their wives were good women but they met friends who began to advise them otherwise. The wives also allowed their friends to be involved in their marital dispute, hence the interference. The following are some of the stated statements from men:

Whenever we had differences in the home, she could call her friends to sit me down, mock me as the head of the home.

Another male respondent explained:

Due to bad influence from the friends, she started drinking beer and doing other illicit things which resulted to our divorce.

Both men and women attested to the fact that some of their family members were involved in dividing them as a couple with bad influence. Some family members encouraged them to drink beer, commit adultery and divorce. The basic fact in the findings is that family and friend interference caused the divorce.

One male stated:

Family members, mostly from her side, used to interfere with our marriage, and also her friends did the

worst of all. They never had respect when I am home. They could come and discuss their issues with my wife and gave her wrong advice at the end of the day.

In line with findings of the study, D'Onofrio (2011) explains that Parental interference was also another aspect that had contributed to the high divorce rate in many countries. Parents involving themselves in their children's affairs escalate the situation and in most cases the couple fails to resolve the problem and resort to divorce.

CONFLICT IN RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

One male respondent complained of the fact that during the courtship, they had agreed that the woman would follow the husband to his church. The respondent narrated:

In our culture, when you marry your new wife, she should change her church to start worshipping at the husband's church, but with me this never happened. My wife refused to join my church and I was about to be chosen as an elder, but due to her refusal to join my church, I was not given the place of an elder.

The conclusion of the quotation is that the refusal of the wife to join the church lead to divorce. Similar to the findings Hill and Kopp (2015) assertion that due to divergent doctrines propounded by different religious faiths, many individuals tend to be bound by those religious principles such as it becomes difficult for one to divorce themselves from them and these may cause tension between two people with differing religious ideals and beliefs. In line with the findings the husband could not divorce himself from the religious belief that the wife had to follow him to church and this becomes one of the reasons for dissolution of marriage.

Religion is expected to give stability to the society but sometimes, the contrary is the reality. Religion sometimes can cause divorce. When a wife decides to change from the husband's church to different church it can led to divorce as discovered by Eyo (2017). Religion which ought to be a pillar of the society sometimes becomes caterpillar wherewith the society is destroyed. To that effect, some churches like Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) and Jehovah's Witnesses do not allow their church members to marry from a different church, which has different religious believes and norms. Therefore, some marriages and some relationships that where leading to marriage have Brocken (divorced) on the bases that one of the partners belongs to a different denomination.

WOMEN'S EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

The research revealed that some women began to despise their husbands after going for further studies and gaining employment. A male respondent stated, *"My wife regarded me uneducated person after sponsoring her to further her education. When she graduated and got a good job with good salary, she became too pompous."* In agreement with this discovery D'Onofrio (2011) enlightens that due to economic empowerment most women undergo, they are said to be competing with their husbands. Unlike in the past when women were submissive to their husbands, modern times have women that in some situations are more financially stable than their husbands. These not only cause friction in a marriage but also loss of respect for the husband which is a treasured virtue to most men.

According to Mapoma (2015), the nature of occupation status of women is a serious predictor of divorce. Those with high risk of divorce are women seemingly in clerical work compared to those in agricultural related works. He further conducted a research in the ten provinces of Zambia, which revealed that there is a less likelihood of wealthy women to divorcing compared to those who were not wealthy. To authenticate the above findings Kalmin and Wangner (2006) elaborates on the truth that divorce rates among women with

high income jobs are high, this is because women with high income are economically more independent from their spouse. This is why divorce rates are high in European societies with more full time working married women in upper positions.

In other instances women in abusive marriage don't see the need of staying in there if they are educated and are able to supply their own needs and those of their children. In other words women with a strong labor market have relatively small financial exist costs, this make it easier to dissolve an unsatisfactory marriage (Cherlin, 1979; Oppenheimer, 1994). Divergent from the findings of this research and what some authors said that made womens education seem negative Olaniyi (2015) research finding explains that majority of the married women are self-employed. The research reviewed that these women where giving financial support to their husband and they were not fully dependent on their husband.

UNFORGIVENESS

Both male and female responded stated that lack of forgiveness caused divorce. Both male and female respondents were found to fail to forgive the past mistakes of their spouse. Whenever there was a new offence, the old offense was remembered and revived. Instead of sorting out the current problem that was currently affecting the couple, they would start dealing with old issues that the offender thought were over and they were forgiven; just to get a shock of their lives to discover they were not forgiven and they are being reminded. Lack of forgiveness is poisonous to marriage, no wonder it leads to divorce. In the final analysis unforgiveness was so toxic to the marriage and the couples ended up divorcing.

As a matter of fact, inasmuch as it is the fuel that drives the marriage everyday, forgiveness is, however, not an easy thing. Sometimes it becomes very difficult to forgive depending on the offense your partner has committed. Further, forgiveness is something that should be done willingly. Thus, Rohde-Brown and Rudestam (2011:110) clarify that "People, upon rationally determining that they have been unfairly treated, forgive when they willfully abandon resentment and related responses (to which they have a right), and endeavor to respond to the wrongdoer based on a moral principle of bene?cence, which may include compassion, unconditional worth, generosity, and moral love (to which the wrongdoer, by nature of the hurtful act or acts, has no right)."

SEXUAL CHALLENGES

Failure of a man to maintain an erection leads to divorce. Impotence in a man is another cause for divorce. It is a situation where a man is unable to achieve an erection and therefore unable to have sex. Impotence is caused by ones thoughts, tiredness, old age, fears of comparison with previous partners, inability to satisfy a wife, busy on schedules, bitterness, guilt from adultery, ridicule, unreasonable depression and having a passive wife. As earlier stated, these problems can be solved by counselling. But if attention is not given to work on these challenges, they may lead divorce.

Further, the male respondents stated that their wives denied them of their conjugal rights. And this is a big challenge because men regard sex so dear to them. A survey conducted by Fileborn et al. (2021:21) in which participants were asked to reflect on the importance of sex to them, for the majority of participants, "Sex was described as an essential or highly important aspect of their lives. Infact one man even confessed: "Sex is an essential component of 'being a man'".

Tembe (2010) research analysis indicated that respondents' infidelity or adultery lead to most of the divorce cases; and even in Zambian courts, it has been noted that the increased rates of divorce are due to increased infidelity by men and women. Despite these rates we have seen that infidelity or adultery can be reduced by

having sex regularly as married couples. Such teachings are relevant and must indeed be emphasized in pre and post marital counselling.

The unique finding of this study when it comes to sexual challenges is that when they have sexual intercourse, other men complained that their wives did not clean their dick or private parts to remove the semen as taught in the counseling. According to these male respondents this was a serious traditional or rather cultural offence that led to a justified divorce.

CHILD BEARING

Findings in this research show that men stated lack of children led to them divorcing their wives. Martins 'et al (2014) reports that infertility has been described as a threat to marital stability in developing countries. In these nations, a woman's economic and social value is directly tied to her ability to conceive and give birth to children.

And Simengwa (2020) tries to give an explanation as to why it mostly women who tend to bear the burden of infertility in a home when she alludes that women bear the blunt of the same as they are perceived to be the ones who are seen pregnant and nursing a child thus the problem greatly manifesting from the woman perspective in society.

One male respondent stated:

For five years we had stayed in marriage, no child came through because of my medical condition I was in then, hence this caused marriage downfall.

NOT KNOWING CHORES

This research revealed that men complained of their wives not knowing how to do house chores. Men explained that these women did not know how to clean the house, plates, how to wash clothes and even how to prepare food for the family. This led to frustration, and divorce for the man.

Unlike in western cultures where they believe in equal sharing of house chores between the couple, in Zambia, including Africa at large, doing house chores used to be and is still strongly considered the work of a woman. When a woman fails to fulfill such obligations, she is generally unfit for marriage. Chanda (2014) gives an account of a scenario where a woman who was married at the age 14 had been divorced after her 27-year-old husband accused her of failing to do household chores. The husband said he was tired of living like a bachelor when he had a wife because he used to do everything for himself even cooking for the family.

Women ought to be doing their responsibilities where house chores are concerned. But inasmuch as an equal sharing of house chores may not be ideal as that is always regarded as the work of a woman, the truth of the matter is that sometimes women can be overwhelmed with chores. Thus, the researcher suggests that where they can, it is important that men assist their wives to do certain things. Especially in a situation where both husband and wife are working, it would be very difficult for the wife to do the chores alone when they do not even have a domestic worker. And Awung and Dorasamy (2015:94) observe: "In the past, paid work was predominantly the sphere of men. However, today the situation has changed drastically in today's society. The number of women pursuing managerial and professional careers has increased in comparison to the past. This implies that a woman cannot be the only one responsible for house chores other options like hiring a maid and someone to take care of the children have to be explored.

Accusation

Findings from the women showed that they were complaining of being blamed for everything that went

wrong in the relationship and family. Men, on the same issue, complained that women accused them of being involved in extra marital affairs which they were not involved in. One male responded lamented “*I was raised in a pastor’s home where we were taught how deadly cheating can be. But my wife kept accusing me of having extra marital affairs which I was not aware of myself.*”

Inadequate Dating

Some respondents explained that they did not have time to know each other for a long time. The dating was for a short period of time, hence not adequate. Finding review that short dating made the two partners not to know each other in a detailed manner by the time they discovered negative aspects of their partner it was in marriage and this caused divorce. In line with this discovery Kalmijn and Poortman (2006) suggested that people who marry young or after a short acquaintance period have higher risks of divorcing. This divorce occurs because people discover negative behavior of their spouse after the marriage commitment they feel like they cannot tolerate the mushrooming behavior. In the same vain religion, parents and guardians have been reviewed to the causers of inadequate dating Tembe (2010) research explained that some churches and pastors did not allow couples who ended up in divorce to date. The church regulation and parents forbid them from knowing each other for fear of them committing fornication before marriage. This is almost like arranged marriages were a couple just meets and get to marry without understanding each other. This is recipe for disaster and need an urgent intervention both families and religious groups have to device conducive ways of young couples to meet as often as possible so they get to make a marital informed decision.

USE OF CHARMS

Respondents confessed that due to many challenges in their marriage, a good number of men and women confessed of using charms. When the other spouse discovered that their spouse was using charms, they were seen to be practicing witchcraft and divorce was seen as a way out.

One male respondent stated:

Because of too much marriage wrangles we went through, she opted to go for charms which were influenced by her bad friends she used to get advice from.

The explanation of using Africa charms to resolve marital challenges lead to the dissolution of this marriage.

Inasmuch as such aspects are treated as so real and existing, it is important, however, to state that in the court of law they are often not considered as reasonable grounds for an end of a matrimonial union. For example, Mulenga (2022) gives a scenario where Livingstone Local Court had reconciled a couple after a man had sued his wife for divorce on grounds that she was fond of using charms. Senior Local Court Magistrate Jerry Mwaka told the couple that he would not grant them divorce because the reasons advanced were petty.

Irrespective of such decision by the court, it must be mentioned that the use of charms or the practice of witchcraft is real and has the potential to destroy marriages. The courts does not take such seriously because there is mostly lack of evidence.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The data collected from male respondents showed that men did not agree with their wives touching their phone in order to check whom they were having a conversation with. One man suggested,

“Women should not touch their husbands’ phones without their permission. Equally, men must not touch their wives’ phones without permission”. Couples should respect their spouses’ space and watch the boundaries.

Thus, Hakainde Hichilema had early this year advised married couples to be tolerant of each other and to avoid checking their spouses’ phones frequently, which he says leads to polarisation of marriages (Shalubala, 2023)

Another male responded actually explained that he divorced the wife because he discovered that through searching her phone the wife was going out with the teacher he had contracted to teach her so that she can rewrite her grade twelve. This responded discovered love messages exchanged between the wife and the teacher and both of them agreed to the fact that they were in the process of having a love affair. This discovery broke the male responded and lead to his decision of divorcing the wife. It can, therefore, be said that inasmuch as spouses should avoid touching their partners’ phones, at the same time they should try by all means to be faithful to one another in order for their marriages to last longer.

Furthermore, ICT and social media were really discovered the 21st Century causes of divorce. The findings also revealed that some spouses spent so much time and energy on social media that they failed to function in the marriage. This is in agreement with Siame’s (2021) report which reveals that social media addiction is ruining thousands of marriages every year, with over 62,000 couples divorcing within four years. And Siame further notes that in one of the seatings in 2019, the Parliament heard that 62,798 couples divorced between 2016 and 2019, mostly as a result of social media abuse leading to breakdown in communication between husband and wife.

Traditionally, a married woman’s domain is her home and young bride would typically spend most of her time with sisters-in-law and her mother-in-law, with any children living in the home, and visiting female relatives. Social media, however, has given some women an outlet to be able to have ongoing and daily interactions with their family and friends whom they have met and nurtured friendships with in their education process. These social connections would not have been available to them in the past and have caused tensions in some marriages. Checking of each other’s phones to an extent of discovering extra marital affairs was another issue of the social media that caused divorce. Some respondent’s confessed of hacking their ex-wives and husbands phones and discovered some flattering messages that led to loss of trust and eventually divorce.

CONCLUSION

Divorce is real and has been occurring with threatening escalating numbers. In this study it was discovered that infidelity, lack of marital affection, physical and mental abuse, substance abuse and addiction, financial challenges, poor communication, lack of confidentiality, lack of respect or un-submissiveness, family and friends interference, conflicts in religious beliefs, women’s education and economic empowerment, unforgiveness, sexual challenges, child bearing, not knowing house chores, accusations, inadequate dating, use of charms and social media were revealed as causes of divorce. Hence to reduce the escalating numbers of divorce marriage counselors, couple and society at large need to be aware of these enemies of marriage and come up with ways of dealing with them in order to reduce and if possible eliminate divorce.

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