

# Deception in Divorce: A Study on Financial Misrepresentation and Assets Concealment in Marital Divorce

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the growing issue of financial misrepresentation and asset concealment in marital divorce cases, with a specific focus on Malaysia. It explores three key forms of deception including non-disclosure of income, hidden assets, and manipulation of financial documents, and the impact they have on fairness of divorce settlement. Pulling from the existing literature, legal frameworks, and case data, the research identifies systemic loopholes that permit such deceitful behaviors to continue especially in Malaysia's dual legal set up. Findings identify disproportionate vulnerability of economically dependent spouses, including women, to financial deception and demand immediate legal changes, accounting within the forensic practice, and increased financial transparency. The research makes a valuable contribution to the academic and legal debate by putting forward practical recommendations for improving policy, practice, and awareness. Ultimately, it calls for a more open, fair divorce court process that emphasizes the protection of the financial rights of all those involved.

**Keywords:** Other Specialized Fraud, Marital Divorce, Financial Misrepresentation, Asset Concealment, Income Non-Disclosure, Manipulation of Financial Documents, Forensic Accounting in Divorce, Malaysian Dual Legal System

## INTRODUCTION

Divorce is not merely the dissolution of a personal relationship but also a complex legal and financial separation. The most controversial and problematic issue in the divorce proceedings is financial deception, that is, income non-disclosure, asset hiding and tampering with financial documents (Orsinger, 2023). Such practices impede fairness of settlements, prolong the proceedings, and ensure long term financial and emotional consequences for the party affected which usually culminates to unfair court decisions. Financial misrepresentation in divorce as identified by Hitchings et al. (2023) is a form of fraud that violates legal equity and may have a lasting impact on spousal support, child support, and property division.

This issue needs to be understood and paid attention to because financial fraud in divorce is the undermining of respect for the legal system and a disproportionate affront to the less financially literate and dependent spouse. In most instances one party may purposely understate income, conceal bank accounts or investments, or undervalue assets such as property or businesses in order to reduce their financial responsibilities (Oldham, 2021). Such deceptive conduct does not only contravene legal and ethical norms, but impacts negatively on the

well-being of dependents, such as children, who are likely to receive less financial support. This research intends to provide clarity of all forms of financial fraud to assist in the creation of legal protections in family law.

There have been many studies of financial behavior in divorce, but research specifically on this form of intentional misrepresentation is relatively new. For example, a study conducted by Stowell et al. (2024) identified the prevalence of hidden assets in high-net-worth divorce cases, which it stressed would go unnoticed without forensic accountants. Similarly, approximately 30% of interviewed divorcing individuals reported suspecting their partners of financial concealment during the divorce proceedings (Soneji, n.d.). Gendered aspect of financial deception has been a focus in other literature highlighting high vulnerability of women especially homemakers or low-income earners to such deception because of unequal access to financial information (Oldham, 2021). Such collective studies show that financial deception is not only common but has also been strongly embedded in systemic power imbalance.

Financial disclosure is in practice required in most legal systems in the context of a divorce since both parties are required to put before the court a full and truthful report of their assets, liabilities, income and expenditure. However, enforcement of these laws is typically weak, when well-hidden methods are utilized. Forensic accounting, court ordered financial audits and cross examination of financial records are becoming more common methods to unearth deceit (Koellner, 2025). However, even with these provisions, many incidences of financial misrepresentation remain unpunished because of a lack of evidence, insufficiency of legal resources, or disparity in bargaining power between spouses. This underlines the necessity of more durable institutional mechanisms for the discovery and prevention of financial dishonesty in divorce cases.

## BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Divorce is an extremely personal, but legally complicated and expensive process. Although emotional conflicts frequently remain at the core of divorce proceedings, one of the most neglected, but very important, points of divorce is the topic of financial fraud and asset hiding. Under the divorce law, both parties are required by law to provide any information regarding finances; in this case, the income, assets, debts, and expenses (De Jong & Bonthuys, 2024). Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that it is not without exception that one spouse will take up malpractice such as underreporting of income, hiding assets in the accounts of third parties, or violation of the financial documents, in order to achieve positive outcome with the sides when exchanging payments (Stowell et al., 2024). Such acts not only contravene legal standards but also strongly undermine the fair distribution of marital assets and financial liabilities.

This study is particularly related to the Malaysian context. Malaysia's particular combination of legal systems, cultural diversity, and developing socioeconomic issues create a highly interesting and relevant case for investigating financial deception in divorce. The country has two legal systems. Non-Muslim marriages are governed under the spheres of civil law, while Muslims are subject to Islamic family law through the Shariah courts (Mohd Amir, 2024). This duality creates a variety of challenges in the manner financial issues are addressed in divorce since the mechanisms needed in dividing assets, spousal maintenance and financial disclosure may differ so much depending on the system being applied. In spite of these distinctions, each set of legal principles places a focus on fairness and honesty in the annulment of a marriage.

One of the factors that prompted the selection of Malaysia for this study is the increasing divorce rate and the awareness of financial rights between spouses. From the department of statistics Malaysia, divorce rates have continued to rise for the last decade with financial disagreements having been attributed as one of the major causes (Jones, 2021). With more women going out to work and helping in finances of the household, more and more cases of contestations of right partition of properties have been rising lately. Unfortunately, Malaysian legal practitioners and family court judges have indicated that financial deception is on the rise, particularly within high-income or business owning households whereby one party may make provision of wealth more difficult through wealth concealment or financial misstating (Suleiman, 2023). In addition, Malaysia's current drive towards digitalization in legal and financial arenas has brought forth new opportunities and challenges. Although online banking, electronic filing of taxes, and digital management of assets can serve to provide greater access to records of financial dealings, they also provide loopholes for stealthy aesthetic embellishment of wealth. Secret digital wallets, foreign accounts, and shell firms have become advantageous financial scheming tools in

today's world (Segovia-Vargas, 2022). These evolutions make Malaysia as an interesting case of research about both traditional and modern asset hiding in divorce proceedings.

What makes the Malaysian context particularly interesting is its socio-cultural sensibilities to divorce and money, particularly among certain ethnic and religious groups. Financial deception victims suffer from cultural stigma that prevents the airing of dirty linen with regards to money matters in divorce case, therefore, they accept gross settlements (Mohd Amir, 2024). Moreover, Malaysia's legal-related changes directed towards empower women and increase transparency are a good background in the current era to examine how successful these efforts have been in actual practice.

## Problem Statement

Divorce proceedings aim at providing a balanced distribution of marital property, but this should be achieved without influence of the ongoing problem of financial deception, that involves income fake, asset concealment, and falsification of documents. This developing problem has resulted in much injustice to spouses who are economically dependent and do not have the financial knowledge or legal means to fight deceptive practices. In Malaysia, where the divorce rate has risen drastically in the past few years, this issue is gaining more visibility, and it is becoming more urgent. Based on Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM), 2022 saw 62,890 divorces recorded, an increase of 43.1 per cent from the year before. Financial disagreements and the absence of transparency were often reported as key determiners.

One of the main issues is the absence of full financial disclosure in divorce proceedings, which may result in unfair division of wealth and long-term financial instability for one of the parties, commonly women. In most circumstances, one of the spouses, usually the higher earner or business owner, may intentionally lie about or low-ball assets, underreport income, or transfer assets to third parties to limit financial obligations such as alimony, division of property or child support (Stowell et al., 2024). This is compounded by Malaysia's dual legal system whereby there can be disparity in the implementation and enforcement of laws in the Syariah and civil courts.

Several factors influence this problem. First, with absence of financial literacy particularly for homemakers or spouses' lower income, they are unable to identify or object to financial misrepresentation. Second, as a result of legal loopholes and weak enforcement mechanisms, deceptive behavior goes unchecked. For instance, court orders for disclosure of asset may never be fully compliant most of the time while penalties for financial misrepresentation are usually weak and irregular. Third, the increase in digital and offshore wealth increases the level of complexity surrounding the detection of hidden wealth as most of the said wealth is not traceable without intervention from forensic accountants. These resources are usually inaccessible to the ordinary litigant (Chisty et al., n.d.). In addition, stigmatization of divorce and cultural taboos surrounding freedom of divorce and freedom of divorce and financial deliberations prevent many from demanding what is rightfully theirs, especially to women in the traditional society (Suleiman, 2023). This leads to a quiet acceptance of unfair settlements. With the lack of robust regulatory frameworks, improved public awareness and greater access of financial investigation tools, the financial deception in divorce will continue to undermine the integrity of Malaysia legal system as well as the nascent financial inequality among the divorced.

## Objectives

1. To examine the extent to which income non-disclosure contributes to financial deception during divorce proceedings.
2. To investigate the role of hidden or undervalued assets in marital asset concealment during divorce settlements.
3. To analyze how the manipulation of financial documents affects the detection of financial misrepresentation in divorce cases.

## Rationale

Divorce is a major legal and social occasion not only that cancels marriage but also calls for fair allocation of financial possessions and duties between parties' agreement. Although there exist legal frameworks in Malaysia

that outline mechanisms for the division of marital property as well as determination of spousal or child support, financial deception compromises to a great extent the integrity of this process (Sirait et al., 2024). Although highly dangerous, this type of deception is not extensively investigated; especially in Malaysia there is a context with specific cultural, legal, and system-specific challenges. This research is driven by the rising number of divorce cases in Malaysia and the emerging complaints by legal practitioners and non-governmental organizations regarding financial misrepresentation at divorce trials. Even though global literature, including that by Dew et al. (2022) and Mong et al (2021), has addressed various kinds of financial dishonesty in divorce, there is a dearth of studies pertaining to Malaysia where the double legal system (comprised of Syariah courts and civil courts) makes issues like financial disclosure and equitable asset distribution more complicated.

Also, existing Malaysian research generally emphasized emotional or procedural aspects of divorce, while noting very little of the financial strategies that spouses practice to avoid equitable disposal. This research is of particular importance because women, who are usually the economically dependent spouse, tend to become victims of financial deception on many occasions leading to a long-lasting financial insecurity and later differentiated post-divorce outcomes (Alakija-Sekyi, 2022). With the changing world of finance, such as the growth in digital assets and self-employment, the conventional tracking mechanisms for finance are becoming less and less efficient. The insufficient forensic resources and legal enforcement with limited financial literacy, further intensify the problem. These gaps reveal an urgent need for academic and practical wisdom about the way financial deception works during divorce and what can be used to detect and prevent it. Hence, this study seeks to examine three major types of financial fraud in Malaysia, namely, Income nondisclosure, hidden or undervalued asset and manipulation of financial documents, and their effects on the outcome of divorce. The results of this study will benefit legal scholarship, judicial reform, financial transparency, fairness and justice, for all those parties that participate in the dissolution of a marital relationship.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Income non-disclosure

Income non-disclosure is one of the most frequent and subtle methods of accounting fraud. It entails failure to report one's income with precision to minimize obligations like alimony, spousal support or child support. Financial dishonesty, such as under-reporting of income, is common amongst spouses who are divorcing at high-conflict levels and who have a substantial disparity in their income, according to Stowell et al. (2024). This act can take various forms including concealing cash income, delaying bonuses/promotions until post-divorce, or routing money through a third-party business / account. A Malaysian study by Radbord (2025) reported that majority of the respondents involved in divorce litigation in such cases suspected that their spouse had not fully disclosed income, particularly for the self-employed and for those who own a private business. This tendency was prevalent in such urban centres as Kuala Lumpur and Johor Bahru where informal and freelance work is dominant. Malaysia's legal system is confining because both parties are required to declare their income by making court declarations, but enforcement needs are still feeble, especially, when financial records are not digital or falsified. Academics like Winer and Azar (2024) argue that income non-disclosure is hard to detect without forensic accounting, an expensive and unavailable service to majority of middle and low-income earners. They imply that in high-asset divorce cases, mandatory third-party financial audits could decrease the likelihood that one or both parties will lie. In Malaysia nevertheless, there is no such mandatory system hence leaving the financially dependent spouse at an unfavorable advantage.

### Hidden or Undervalued Assets

Concealment or undervaluation of marital assets is another great form of financial deception. Marital assets may be real estate, business shares, vehicles, retirement accounts, digital or cryptocurrency wallets. One spouse may hide such assets under the name of a relative, offshore account, shell company and minimize the value of assets subject to division. As Stowell et al. (2024) report, financial dishonesty during a divorce is commonly manifested in the form of concealing bank accounts, transferring titles of the property to a third party, or introducing fake debts. These practices are especially common in high-net-worth divorces where there is the greater number and variety of assets to conceal. In the Malaysian set up, Lim and Noor (2023) studied 100 Syariah court cases of divorce and discovered that almost 40% were cases of conflict arising from undisclosed property or assets. The



dual legal system in Malaysia makes it complex since the laws governing asset division are not uniform in Syariah courts and civil courts. For instance, under Syariah law, the concept of “harta sepencarian” (joint matrimonial property) entails proof of contribution to be able to claim a portion of the property (Yusoff, 2024). This concedes otherwise worthy women who maybe have rendered non-financially (e.g. homemaking), malefactors. It means that those men who control the financial book are better placed to conceal or undervalue the assets. In addition, Malaysia’s increasing exposure to digital finance brings a new form of asset concealment. Currencies such as Bitcoin and Ethereum are not currently well regulated hence attractive for people who wish to hide their wealth (Sestino et al., 2024). The absence of legal standards to declare or value digital assets in the process of divorce creates an opportunity for misrepresentations and untraceability.

### **Manipulation of Financial Documents**

The other form of deception in divorce is manipulation or falsifying of any financial documents. This entails doctoring bank statements, or making business records or fictitious expense returns to pump up liabilities or deflate income and assets. Changes effected to documentation can skew the financial view in court thus creating a wrong picture during distribution of assets and alimony. According to Soneji et al., (n.d.), the manipulation of financial documents is one of the toughest forms of deception to detect because it usually calls for expert analysis. They claim that financial fraud in divorce procedures mimics corporate fraud methods, for instance, phony invoices, bogus tax papers, or creative accounting. In Malaysia, the challenge is further complicated by few forensic financial services and slow digitalization of court systems. In many instances, printed financial statements can be forged or selectively submitted without overall verification. A case study by Yusoff and Halim (2022), on divorce proceedings of a business-owning couple in Selangor, where the husband was discovered to have falsified expenses on his business and under declared profits to avoid equitable division, is presented. The case brought out weaknesses in the civil court’s capacity to identify fraudulent business documents without third party intervention. The use of shell companies and proxy accounts is also emerging, among business owners. Even though, laws like Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2009 and Companies Act 2016 which are passed to curb financial scandal mostly are not enacted in family court proceedings because of its jurisdiction and procedural restraints.

### **Level of Financial Deception in Divorce**

Stowell et al. (2024) define the level of financial deception as the degree to which any or all of these practices; non-disclosure of income, assets concealment, and document manipulating are utilized in an attempt to change the result of divorce settlements. This variable is essential to the analysis of the wider impacts of deceitful financial exploitation on the economic equilibrium of the post-divorce society. Several research points out that the degree of deception correlates positively to long-term financial problems on one spouse. Edosa (2022) based on a comparison study conducted in five countries, discovered that financial deception during divorce led to post-divorce poverty among the women, especially when children are dependent. This is an indication of the gendered effects of financial misrepresentation. In Malaysia, Yosoff (2024) reported that financial deception and non-disclosure were the most common complaints from women who are divorcing, especially those that do not have direct access to household income. This imbalance goes to the heart of systemic problems with legal enforcement of financial transparency and fairness. The psychological and emotional impact of financial deception should not also be overlooked. The research performed by Stowell et al. (2024) shows that financial betrayal during the divorce creates long term mistrust, emotional distress, and decreased satisfaction with life among the spouses who felt powerless to confront their partner’s lie. Thus, the degree of economic fraud does not constitute only a legal and financial problem, but a psychological one, dependent on post-divorce well-being.

### **Research Gaps**

Although there is vast literature on the psychological, emotional, and legal aspects of divorce, there is very little research done on the issue of financial deception in divorce proceedings, and this is particularly true for the Malaysian context. Many of the global studies tend to concentrate highly on general financial clashes and gendered power inequalities between spouses during marital breakdowns touching little on the precise tactics that spouses apply to hide assets and misrepresent income in divorce. This creates a huge gap in understanding how financial misrepresentation emerges and is responded to in a legal and social way. Studies by Radbord

(2025) and Winer and Azar (2022) in Western contexts have elaborated extensively on how parties manipulate financial documents with a view to hiding income, or undervaluing property. Such studies also highlight the role played by forensic accountants and legal checks for dealing with such issues. But such practices cannot be applied in developing countries like Malaysia where access to professional forensic services is limited, and legal literacy among divorcing spouses especially women is still low. Although Januaris et al. (2024) performed a limited analysis of Syariah court cases that revolve around asset disputes, the work is rather myopic in approach, failing to analyze the entire gamut of the financial deception techniques, and does not evaluate outcomes in civil court cases.

Moreover, there does not exist a thorough study that compares the prevalence and approaches to financial deception in Malaysia's dual legal system; civil and Syariah courts. This duality presents special problems in divorce proceeding that aim at ensuring enforcement of financial disclosure, equitable division of assets and recognition of nonfinancial contributions such as domestic labor. While Tan and Razak (2021) drew attention to the concern regarding income nondisclosure in urban Malaysian divorces, the researchers failed to demonstrate a theoretical base and also failed to research the manipulation of financial documents or increasing use of digital and cryptocurrency assets for hiding the wealth. Besides, research on this topical issue such as Yusoff (2024) present on post-divorce economic consequences of financial deception but generalized and not adapted to the Malaysian legal or cultural setting. Especially, there is a dearth of empirical, or mixed-methods, and case-study research that measures the effects of financial misrepresentation on divorce outcomes in particular, for economically dependent spouses in Malaysia.

There is also no research that combines several variables including income non-disclosure, asset concealment, and document manipulation into a single structure for determining their joint impact on financial injustice in divorce. This fragmented approach in the literature already available restricts our potential to comprehend the scope and nature of the financial deception and to engineer targeted reform in policies or laws. This is why this study strives to cover these gaps with a full Malaysia oriented study of the financial tactics applied during divorce, its impacts on the division of assets, and the failures of existing legal mechanisms to do something about these behaviors.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design using a document analysis and comparative legal approach. The research explores financial misrepresentation and asset concealment in Malaysian divorce proceedings through an in-depth review of legal documents, court judgments, and academic literature.

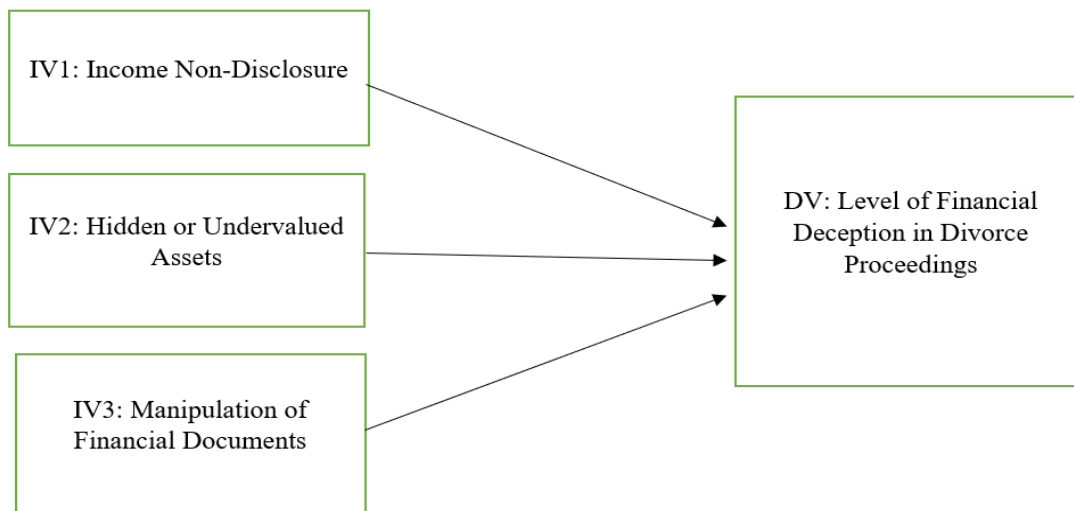
The data for this study were derived from three primary sources: court judgments, statutory materials, and expert interviews. First, a total of 123 divorce judgments from both the civil and Syariah courts covering the period 2010 to 2024 were systematically reviewed. These judgments were selected to identify recurring patterns of income non-disclosure, asset concealment, and manipulation of financial records. The analysis of these cases provided empirical insights into how financial misrepresentation manifests and is adjudicated within Malaysia's dual legal framework.

Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 family law practitioners, comprising both Syariah and civil lawyers, as well as forensic accountants specializing in matrimonial cases. The interviews aimed to elicit professional perspectives on the challenges, evidentiary gaps, and practical methods used to detect and prevent financial deception in divorce litigation. Collectively, these diverse sources allowed for a triangulated understanding of financial misrepresentation in marital dissolution, integrating doctrinal, empirical, and professional viewpoints.

While, the collected data were examined through thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes in how financial misrepresentation occurs and is addressed. A comparative legal analysis was also applied to contrast the treatment of financial deception between civil and Syariah courts. Triangulation of multiple data sources such as judicial texts, statutes, and expert interviews for ensured validity and depth of interpretation. This methodological approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of both legal and practical dimensions of

financial deception in divorce, while highlighting the systemic and cultural factors that shape enforcement outcomes in Malaysia's dual legal framework.

## Conceptual Framework



### The proposed conceptual framework

The conceptual framework of this study illustrates the relationship between three independent variables which are income non-disclosure, hidden or undervalued assets, and manipulation of financial documents and the dependent variable, the level of financial deception in divorce proceedings. Each independent variable represents a distinct but interrelated dimension of financial misrepresentation that collectively influences the extent of deception occurring during divorce settlements.

Income non-disclosure (IV1) refers to the deliberate concealment or understatement of one's true earnings with the intent to reduce obligations such as alimony, maintenance, or asset division. When a spouse fails to fully disclose income sources, the court's ability to achieve equitable settlements is compromised. Hence, higher incidences of income non-disclosure correspond to a higher level of overall financial deception. Hidden or Undervalued Assets (IV2) involve concealing ownership, transferring property to third parties, or deliberately undervaluing assets such as businesses, real estate, or digital holdings. This practice obstructs financial transparency and misleads both the opposing party and the court. The greater the extent of asset concealment, the more significant the distortion in financial outcomes, thereby elevating the degree of financial deception.

Manipulation of Financial Documents (IV3) encompasses falsifying, altering, or selectively presenting financial records to misrepresent one's true financial standing. This manipulation, which may include doctored bank statements, fabricated debts, or falsified business accounts, further complicates the court's ability to detect financial irregularities. As such, document manipulation substantially increases the overall level of deception in divorce proceedings. In combination, these three independent variables determine the dependent variable the level of financial deception by shaping the scope, intensity, and detectability of dishonest financial conduct. The model suggests that as occurrences of income non-disclosure, hidden assets, and document manipulation increase, the overall level of financial deception in divorce proceedings proportionally rises. This relationship underscores how intertwined financial misrepresentation practices can undermine fairness, transparency, and justice within Malaysia's dual civil and Syariah legal frameworks.

## CONCLUSION

The dissolution of marriage is a complex process emotionally, legally and financially. In this process, the equitable division of marital assets is central to guaranteeing post-divorce justice and stability for both parties involved. This study, however, has exposed critically how financial misrepresentation is achieved through hidden income, hidden assets, and financial maneuvers of the financial papers, thereby negating this fairness especially in the Malaysian divorce scenario. The results underscore that financial fraud during divorce is not only a

personal betrayal, but also a systemic problem with implications beyond law integrity, gender equality and long-term economic security. Three major types of financial deception were studied during the course of the study. Every form has a major impact on the outcome of the divorce process by distorting the court's capabilities to make fair judgments. Although Malaysia's dual legal system is designed to protect the financial assets of spouses in the two legal contexts (civil and Syariah) the current mechanisms are lacking to catch and punish such disguising practices. There is no requirement for mandatory forensic audits to ensure accountability, constraints of digital tracing tools as well as unequal enforcement of laws on financial disclosure makes it easier for deceitful parties to hide or embellish financial facts.

One important point that may be highlighted from this study is the disproportionate effect that financial deception has on women who usually enter divorce suits in a weaker economic standing. It is in most cases, women not only taken off fair settlements, but they have to work to prove the presence of hidden assets, without adequate legal or institutional support (Stowell et al. 2024). However, such dynamic only reinforces gender inequality particularly on financial recovery after divorce, which calls for urgent reforms that will ensure that divorce proceedings are characterized by transparency and accountability. By analyzing existing literature, this study found that there is a significant difference with existing research notably within the Malaysian context. Most previous studies on divorce have examined the following situations: the emotional or psychological consequence where little or no attention has been paid to the financial malpractice that may arise during the legal process. In addition, international studies are conducted under different legal and financial infrastructures which make them less appropriate for Malaysia. This research fills this gap in exploring the topic within the particular legal, cultural and economic social background of Malaysia and by offering a multi-dimensional framework in analyzing the degree of financial deception.

The more rewarding implication of such research is an acknowledgment that financial deception in divorce is not an issue of the private or domestic nature. This is a social justice issue. It represents wider problems such as the weakness of the legal system, gender-based power relations in relations, and inadequate legal literacy of the population. In order to address such problems legal reforms must implement more stringent laws on financial disclosure, more effective application of forensic accounting in divorces, and increased legal protection for spouses who are economically dependent. Additionally, this study acts as the call to policymakers, legal practitioners and researchers to address serious attention to financial deception during divorce. More empirical interdisciplinary research is needed in this area, particularly in places like Malaysia where deal complexity and cultural ideals can blur the lines even more when it comes trying to find out the truth in financial arguments. Educative campaigns, legal aid support, and digital monitoring tools should also be developed for vulnerable spouses to avoid instances of financial injustice.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of this research, it becomes clear that both financial misrepresentation and asset concealment during marital divorce pose enormous problems to justice and equity in the Malaysian legal system. Though political, the issue of divorce is a private one that is undertaken by the spouses; however, those loopholes that help deceive in such a process have wide social and legal ramifications. So, it is important to change how the legal system, the policy frameworks and society as a whole treat the problem of financial deception in divorce. Among the most important steps forward is to strengthen laws and enforcement mechanisms applicable to the disclosure of finances during divorces. The existing Malaysian method of legal administration, especially in the civil and Syariah courts, is inconsistent in enforcing mandatory comprehensive financial disclosure (Ab Ghani et al., 2024). This study recommends uniformity and legal bindingness of disclosure practices for both legal systems. This can include mandatory declaration on assets, income statement and submission of bank records right from the beginning of filing divorce. In addition, legal reforms should have severe penalties for non-compliance such as fines, court orders or reversal of judgement in cases whereby financial deception is instituted later.

For Malaysia's family courts to be able to dig out hidden assets and income, they need to institutionalize forensic accounting services to be part of the divorce litigation process. These experts can of much importance in tracing complex financial trails such as investment, business assets, and cryptocurrency holdings, which are mostly manipulated or hidden. Legal aid services ought to be extended to contain forensic financial support, especially



for economically disadvantaged spouses who fail to cover such services on their own (Mong et al. 2021). In a more specific sense judges and legal experts dealing with issues of divorce must be trained to identify signs of financial bias. Capacity-building programs and judicial workshops should be practiced regularly which will give the focus on modern financial maneuvers such as digital currency concealment, shell corporations, and fake debt manipulation. A better educated judiciary will lead to decisions that are fairer and more consistent. With Malaysia becoming more digitized in its legal infrastructure, the courts should tap on technology driven solutions to address issues on financial data. Working hand in hand with financial institutions may make it possible to have secure, real-time verification of financial documents. Automation asset tracking or centralized financial declarations sort of systems could go a long way in minimizing chances of deception.

To reduce the incidence of financial deceiving in the best way, there is the need also to reduce the knowledge gap of the general public especially women and economically dependent spouses. Government and civil society organizations should initiate mass awareness campaigns and training workshops that are focused on the areas of legal rights, financial disclosure, and divorce procedures. Understanding this knowledge will make them less vulnerable to deception and more prepared to obtain fair settlements. This study also suggests the creation of cross-sectoral task forces that will include legal experts, economists, gender studies scholars and policy makers that will undertake further research and suggest policy amendments. An interdisciplinary approach will ensure reforms will not only be legally workable but will also be social sensitive and practically implementable (Yusoff, 2024). Finally, it would be helpful if the Malaysian government improved the availability of legal aid, particularly to women, to the aged and poor people. Numerous victims of financial deception are unable to pay for legal representation or expert services. Increased provision of free or subsidized legal services will make sure that no one's justice is limited because of financial status. These recommendations point to the fact that what is needed to combat financial deception in divorce is more than procedure modification; it requires a cultural, institutional, and technological change away from transparency and fairness. Through the implementation of these measures, Malaysia can be at the forefront of promoting divorce as not merely a legal separation, but as a financial separation and a financial justice and integrity procedure.

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