



Common Factors Contributing to Divorce among Couples in Zanzibar

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Authors' contributions

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation attempts to assess assessed common factors contributing to divorce among couples in Zanzibar. The study employed a qualitative research approach where by interview and documentary reviews were used as a method of data collection. A total of 35 participants involved in this study, where by 30 participants were divorced men and women who were obtained through snowball sampling and five *Kadhis* who were purposely selected from both Unguja and Pemba districts. Thematic analysis procedure was applied to analyze data. The study found that there is a high prevalence of divorce among Zanzibar couples. The interviewees were particularly concerned about the overwhelming number of divorces which was on a steady uptrend. The study identifies factors which lead to the rate of divorce in Zanzibar and found that lack of tolerance among the couples, family interference of their children marriage, psychological and emotional abuse were the major common factors contributing to divorce among couples in Zanzibar. The study concluded that divorce problem is at larger extent and participants are aware of the magnitude of the divorce and it occurs every day and everywhere in Zanzibar. Thus this is a serious problem among young couples and children. In addition, family interference of children marriage and social networking, immaturity, sexual dissatisfaction, psychological and emotional abuse, drug abuse, poverty, belief on financial expenditure, financial stress contributes more to divorce among Zanzibar people. This leads to majority of young couples to face frequently fights in their marriages hence influencing divorce.

Keywords: *Factors; divorce; couples.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Divorces and separation rates have gone to an increase radically on a global level between 1960s & 1970s which reached a peak in the early 1980s, as cited in Amato [1] and Wayne (2004) though it has dropped slightly since then particularly in industrialized countries [2]. United States of America recorded the highest divorce rate of 53% relative to other countries (Census bureau, 2018). A number of its states with high divorce rates are Oklahoma, Nevada and Arkansas. In Europe, Elena [3] reported that there is the highest divorce rate in Europe, whereby countries such as Czech Republic, Hungary, Portugal and Belgium are reported to have divorce rate of 60% to 70%. The causes of the divorce are attributed to be different mindset of partner's economic circumstance and financial related conflicts [3].

Surprisingly, there is a current rise in divorce rates in East Asia, e.g., there is an incensement of divorce rates in China from 0.3% in 1978 to 2.0% in 2010 (Chen & Li, 2014) [4]. This also took place in South Korea where the divorce rates rose from 0.5 to 2.3%. However, in the recent years, Africa has witnessed a higher rate of marital misunderstanding as a result of westernization, globalization, urbanization and industrialization periods triggered to a monetary industrial economy that have affected the extended families that had the responsibilities to solve any misunderstanding between the couples [5]. With respect to the marriage and divorce report released by department of statistics in South Africa (2018) there is upward trend in divorce from 21,998 (2012) to 25,326 (2016), and constitute an increase of 0.3% from the divorces granted in 2015.

In Eastern Africa particularly Kenya, divorce is similarly reported to be getting higher as resolute by factors such as, financial shakiness, public uncertainty, aspiration to have farm duties and incorrect justifications for marriage by the immature natives Mngondo [6]. The National Panel Survey which was carried out on Tanzania's households by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in 2015 showed that the rate of divorce has doubled within the six years, a situation that threatens the future of that important institution.

In Zanzibar, the divorce rate is increasingly radically and it is one of the main social problems which currently exist all over the Islands. Its

abnormal incidents which often are reported by civil societies, Kadhi courts and social workers where by up to 2012 the percentage of divorce in Zanzibar was over four while the Urban West region has higher rate followed by Southern region and Northern region (Census Data, 2012). In 2018 the total of 1,600 cases of divorce were reported to Kadhi courts while 48 cases were reported to the Zanzibar Female Lawyers Association [7]. Moreover, in 2020 the Speaker of House of Representative allowed Kadhi's offices to establish the special offices from each of the district of Zanzibar that will be able to offer the marriage education with the purpose of addressing the divorce rate in Zanzibar Nuzulack [7].

Courts in Tanganyika and Zanzibar each recognize and enforce the right of Muslim men to unilaterally divorce their wives under Islamic law. Yet, Tanganyika's family law in addition provides for a uniform, secular marriage dissolution process, which is available to both men and women regardless of religious affiliation. In Zanzibar, marriages between Muslims are dissolved solely in accordance with principles of Islamic law, while non-Muslims family law in addition provides for a uniform, secular marriage dissolution process, which is available to both men and women regardless of religious affiliation (Tanzania Law of marriage Act, 1971).

Currently, only Islamic Shariah is used in divorce matters in Zanzibar, while criminal and civil cases are heard in the regular courts. However, regular courts can be involved in divorce cases when the Kadhi courts have failed. There are 10 Kadhi courts in Zanzibar from each district, but however, still the persisting problem is gaining momentum to exist in many of Zanzibar families while the Urban District becomes the leading one (Census Data, 2012). It is very possible that, the rates of divorces are more than the indicated findings, probably this is due to some of the married couples not seeing the importance to register their divorce occurrences while there are few and current studies which focus on examining divorce among couples in Zanzibar: common factors and the associated measures to address it (Deputy Kadhi, 2021).

The rate of divorce in Zanzibar is still high despite government's effort [8]. This has also been reported in the Citizen News Paper in 2014 that more than 500 divorces have been issued in just one court in Zanzibar from January to September 2014. Ministry of Social Welfare,

Youth, Women and Children Development in Zanzibar (2013) also indicated an increasing rate of divorce. This persisting problem results into many negative effects among couples, children, relatives and society at large (Joam, 2015). These problems include guilt feelings, and loss of faith in marriage and family unit, anger, abuse of women, loss of confidence, prostitution, suicide and introduction of destructive behaviours [9]. Different interventions have been made to deal with the existing problem including counseling and psychotherapy, psychosocial and legal interventions as well as public awareness.

Some of these interventions are aiming to increase the satisfaction and stability of family relationships, prevent and reduce divorce and its complications, others attempt to assist individuals defeat emotional problems, while yet others hunt for improving social skills [10]. However, the divorce rate in Zanzibar is increasing tremendously while the current and possible factors were not empirical. Therefore this study covered the existing gap by assessing common factors contributing to divorce among couples in Zanzibar.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Marriages as an institution have always experienced challenges from history, and they will persist to have challenges due to different causal factors. The review of the literature has shown several studies with many findings related to prevalence of divorce among the couples to inform the study at hand. For-example, Wilson (2016) conducted a study on the factors influencing the occurrence of divorce among the married couples. The study consider the roles of psychoactive drugs such as alcohol, marijuana and tobacco on divorce occurrence, as resulted by the behavior of addicted people to spend much of their time, resource and energy on drug taking or consumption rather than on family issues.

Some couples are addicted and people who have been addicted usually spend fewer time to socialize with their children and family hence leave their home responsibilities to their peers who sometime have little capability and income or not to support the family. Alcohol has ruined some homes in African families (Adegoke, 2010 cited in Love, 2014). An alcoholic husband, for example, can hardly make a reasonable and constructive decision regarding the running of his family. He is only interested in spending his

money on drink. The effects of alcohol are harmful. When a man gets drunk, he neglects the affairs of his house. He will no longer support his family as he ought, and he may even beat his wife. In the face of alcohol abuse, the family falls into danger.

According to [11] social networking is nowadays seen as an important and easy tool for individuals to start and develop relationships and is also used extensively for these purposes. These social networks such as Face book, Whatsapp, Instagram and Tiktok enable individuals to meet people from different cultures, different countries, different genders and different professions. It is very possible for individual to spend too much time, effort and money on these social networks than anything else. This social networks use, create opportunities for some people to feel safe and free and get rid of the demands and hardships of daily routines and break free from a lonely and isolated social life [12].

However things are different when the internet is used by people who are married in real life in order to develop and build up a new relationship, this can cause serious problems. Even though pursuing a relationship online might seem harmless to those who actually do it, due to the fact that they do not have any physical contact with anybody [13]. The situation is taken seriously by the real life partners, a situation in which their partner is likely to have physical contact with somebody else, and therefore it can be said that online relationships are also considered "cheating", Online cheating, in other words "cyber-cheating" [14].

Furthermore, Lupkin [15] depicted that cyber-cheating has many effects on the real life relationship of the couples. It affects the deceived couples and even the family negatively. The deceived couple feels a sense of shame and guilt and loses his/her trust in the relationship with the deceiving partner. The person who has been cheated deeply experiences the feelings of being hurt, shame, guilt, anger, rejection and loneliness [15]. The online relationship gains more and more importance than the real life relationship which causes harm to the sexual intimacy between the couples in real life. Couples share less with each other as time passes, communication and conflict problems have a negative effect on the resolution process and the feelings of trust and being a whole in a relationship are harmed. Children are ignored;

they face concentration problems and can from time to time be exposed to internet sites like pornographic ones whose contents are for only adults [16]. It is stated that the most common reason for divorce in America is the online cheating of married couples and that in one out of three divorce files, the word "Facebook" appears as a reason [15].

Moreover, Bolhari and Saberi[17], citing Rice (1983) further argued that the mother in-law is usually seen as the one who meddles, interferes, and intrudes on the couples' privacy. In addition, she is frequently blamed for being possessive, over protective, demanding, criticizing and nagging. In essence cultural and ethnic values play a significant role in marital behaviors. Different cultures and sub-cultures organize different adaptive family arrangements and interactive styles. In addition, the manner in which problems are dealt with, pathways of seeking and obtaining help, what is expected, and how a person interacts with a professional are all affected by the cultural and social factors [18]. Afifi, Davis, Denes and Merrill [2], while citing Pelt (2008), argues that the manner in which you speak and listen today is affected by what you learned as a child when growing up. You may have observed destructive patterns, such as hostility, mind reading, silent treatment and yelling. Some spouses may have carried these same patterns into their marriages. The way individual spouses function in a marriage relationship is greatly influenced by his or her family of origin. It is quite evident that the influence of relatives on a marriage usually ranges from subtle to obvious.

Similarly, Bolhari and Saberi[17] investigated that parents and close relatives such as in-laws are highly regarded as a basis of quarrel to couples, especially young couples, as well as, a source of support and help (According to [17]. Many young couples have a high regard for their elders and do not want to be emotional and even social cut off from them. Based on this finding, most of the spouses who are too much fused to their parents or other relatives have little time for their spouses, hence, their marriage is likely to have crisis in the long run. Close relatives such as in laws are mostly considered as easy scapegoats for family tensions. Some parents fail to understand their sons or daughters desire to distance themselves. They instead hold their daughter's or son's in-laws responsible for disaffection of affection. Bolhari and Saberi[17] further argue that the family of origin has

contribution on how flexible and accommodating the marital couple would be, due to strong cultural ties on gender roles and behavior from childhood. This simply implies that the unfinished business with one's parents gets in the way of a couple's working on their new relationships. With time tension is hoped to strike between the couple and their parents.

Moreover, the social class including the peers, colleagues, age mates, or even neighbors may at times influence conflicting couples towards seeking a divorce. This most often happens when couples in marital crisis carelessly expose their marriage frustrations with the aim of seeking sympathy and the right advice from their concerned friends. As a result, they end up making wrong decisions, with their marriages breaking up. Some other couples within the social class have also carelessly ended up breaking their marriages by copying their friends who have done it before with the hope that their problems would be over [19].

Poverty is regarded an issue resulted to marriage dissolution in some couples. This is derived by the individual expectation he/she had at the time of getting married. People are getting married for different purposes, whereby economic purposes, pairing to a person whom you can live with and both of you create wealth to avoid dependency and being a burden to one another being among the one [20](Willitts, 2006). As soon as this becomes shakable some couples have ended up filing for divorce.

Besides, Chireshe[21] investigated that unemployment has contributed to several married men moving from one place to another searching for dependable jobs in order to be able to support their families. In this regard many have ended up pairing with other women to get satisfied sexually. This has led to several marriages ending up in divorce. However, economic challenges should not be encouraged to break marriages. Instead an establishment of common regime of the family with the mutual agreement by the couple must be enforced. There is need for common consultative, budgeting, and planning and control systems. Clark and Brauner-Otto [22] confirm that arguments about money are by far the top predictor of divorce. It is not children, sex, in-laws or anything else, but it is money for both men and women. This is a clear indication that money differences between married couples emanate from deeper issues in relationship power, and

trust. If these deep issues in relationships are problematic, then the couples involved are more likely to divorce. Probably couples fight about money because they are experiencing negative financial events like a job loss. The stress that accompanies financial problems may overwhelm the couples.

Valenzuela, Halpern and Katz [23], each couple has a belief on the best way to use money, for instance, using money for status or security. When spouses' differ regarding finances, they end up into conflicts. The financial strains results to increased couples level of violence, to married couples. Chowdhury [24] carried out a research at Washington that confirmed high rates of divorce that are mostly influenced by such factors as poverty and low earning. However, further research by Voena (2015), support the idea of economic status as a key factor affecting young adults' quality of relationship, thus ending in divorce. Moreover, Harrell-Bond [19] likewise observes that financial strain mostly increases couples' level of violence for married couples.

Evidence by Kuhn and McParland (2008) suggest that lack of communication over financial issues is the real problem and not money per se. Research has shown that financial stress has a direct impact on financial wellbeing. When couples are unable to manage their finances because of inadequate resources or poor money-management decisions, they are constrained from achieving financial wellbeing and relationship satisfaction [25](Britt & Huston, 2012; Halliday-Hardie & Lucas, 2010). Britt, Huston and Durband (2010) add that financial stress is more prominent when a couple's financial contributions are not equitable (i.e. one partner is contributing significantly more to the couple's finances than the other). Dew and Stewart (2012) argue that the presence of financial stress may also exist in a relationship because both partners are being affected by common financial stressors such as low income and high debt. Arnett (2014) suggests that conflict may exist among young adults when there is a lack of sound financial decisions being made or lack of communication over financial decisions.

The Couple's age of marriage has a great contribution to divorce. This is due to the fact that many individuals at teen's years are not well matured to hold and tolerate different married outcomes whether emotional such as anger; social such domestic violence or economic. It

seems that it is best not to marry at a very young age or wait too long before marrying. Women who marry while still in their teens are twice as likely to divorce as women in their thirties. Moreover, those who marry in their thirties are half as likely to divorce as those who marry in their twenties [26].

3. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative research approach where by interview and documentary reviews were used as a method of data collection. A total of 35 participants involved in this study, where by 30 participants were divorced men and women who were obtained through snowball sampling and five Kadhis who were purposely selected from both Unguja and Pemba districts.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Respondents Personal Information

This study was conducted in five districts, particularly at the districts *Kadhi* courts in Zanzibar. The districts are the Urban District, Central District and Northern B District, in Unguja and Chake-Chake, Pemba and Wete District in Pemba. The sample of the study was 5 *Kadhis* and 30 divorced people, i.e.both men and women. The respondents were selected from five (5) districts); i.e. one (1) *Khadhi* and six (6) respondents on gender base were sampled from each district in both Unguja and Pemba. Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the *Kadhis* and divorced couples. On gender category, 20(57.1%) were males and 15(42.9%) were females. Thus, there were many males than females. In terms of their ages, 2 (6.6%) of respondents aged between 18 and 25 years, 7(23.3%) of the respondents aged between 26 and 35 years, 13(43.3%) of the respondents aged between 36 and 45 years, 8(26.6%) of respondents were 46 years and above.

Each district was represented by seven (7) participants. These are one *Kadhi*, three divorced men and three divorced women from each district in both Unguja and Pemba. They were obtained through snowballing. The frequency of pupils who participated in the study in Unguja and Pemba was the same percentage (20%) from all districts. Respondents from Pemba were 14 (40%) while Ungujawere 21 (60%). This difference is influenced by the difference in the number of districts in each region. In Unguja,

there are six districts while there are only four districts in Pemba.

Other information includes respondents' education and employability status. The findings on respondents' profile are presented in Table 1. On education characteristics, primary education was 1(3.3%), secondary education were 15 (50%) respondents, college/ university level were 11(36.7%) respondents. On the other hand, those within formal education were 3(10%) respondents. On the other hand, 10(33.3%) of respondents were public sector employees, 7(23.3%) of respondents were private sector employees, 9(30%) of respondents were jobless and 4(13.3%) of respondents belong to other categories of career like entrepreneurs, driver and volunteer.

4.2 Common Factors Contributing to Divorce among Couples in Zanzibar

The second research objective sought to identify the common factors contributing to divorce among couples in Zanzibar. In order to obtain information from the respondents, data were collected through interviews with divorced people and *Kadhis* in Zanzibar.

Findings from divorced people revealed that lack of tolerance among the couples, family interference of their children marriage, immaturity, and sexual dissatisfaction, psychological and emotional abuse were the major common factors contributing to divorce among couples in Zanzibar. For example, one of the respondents said that:

...Lack of tolerance among the young couples majorly culminates to frequent misunderstandings and fights. Thus, they lead to divorce. Tolerance is imperative for marital survival. If couples are intolerant of each other, divorce is inevitable. In addition, immaturity, sexual dissatisfaction, psychological and emotional abuse influence divorce among couples in Zanzibar... (Male Divorcee9).

Another interviewee had this to say:

...The irresponsibility of some couples has also contributed to a high rate of divorce in Zanzibar. Currently, drug abuse is on the increase in Zanzibar and married couples who engage in such activities are likely to

face irreconcilable differences that transpire to divorce... (Female Divorcee4).

Another respondent stated that:

...With the current advancement in technology, social networking has in part contributed to divorce. Majority of couples no longer communicate directly as most of them prefer interaction with their smart phones in comparison to people. Some common concerns brought by couples to our courts is of partners having online intimate relationships on platforms such as Facebook and social networks. Couples no longer have quality time with each other... (Female Divorcee21).

Explaining the differences that resulted in divorce, one of the key informants cited:

...Arrogance causes failure to seeking solution to family problems (Kadhi 1,4 and 5), unfaithfulness among couples eroded trust in marriage (Kadhi, 1,2,3,4,5) and witchcraft (Kadhi1 and 3). In addition, drug abuse, misuse of social networks, and family interference in the privacy of couples has also caused divorce among couples... (Kadhi 2 and 3).

One *Khadhi* court clerk had this to say:

...Infidelity is rampant among young couples. This has significantly contributed to divorce among the younger generation. Additionally, some married men are irresponsible and immature. Sexual dissatisfaction is also a major complaint, others include psychological, emotional abuse and lack of pre and marital education, all of which have contributed to the current increase of divorce in Zanzibar... (Kadhi 5).

The statements above imply that a majority of younger couples are ill equipped to appropriately handle the multiple psycho social issues facing marriage, leading to divorce among couples in Zanzibar. For instance, marital interferences by couples' families of origin, misuse of social networks, arrogance and infidelity are some of the issues cited. Other complaints' causing divorce includes drug abuse and immaturity particularly among male partners, sexual dissatisfaction, psychological and emotional abuse.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Category	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	20	51.7
	Female	15	42.9
	Total	35	100
Age	18-25	2	6.6
	26-35	7	23.3
	36-45	13	43.3
	46 +	8	26.6
	Total	30	100
Level of Education	Primary	1	3.3
	Secondary	15	50.0
	College/University	11	36.7
	Others	3	10
	Total	30	100
Employment Status	Public sector	10	33.3
	Private sector	7	23.3
	Jobless	9	30
	Others	4	13.3
	Total	30	100

Source: Field Data (2022)

Findings showed that the variables influencing divorce among couples in Zanzibar included not only inter-couple issues like incompatibility, stress from daily life, and drug abuse. Other factors such parental meddling in children's marriages and misuse of social networking platforms. Thus, there are both internal and external factors that influence divorce rates among spouses in Zanzibar.

The results are in line with the findings of Bolhari and Saberi[17], who argued that the mother in-law is usually seen as the one who meddles, interferes, and intrudes on the couples' privacy. In addition, she is frequently blamed for being possessive, over protective, demanding, criticizing and nagging. In essence, cultural and ethnic values play a significant role in marital behaviors. Different cultures and sub-cultures organize different adaptive family arrangements and interactive styles.

In addition, Hertlein and Piercy [11] found that although social networking is currently an important and easy tool for individuals to start and develop relationships and, its misuse can be particularly detrimental to intimate relationships. These social networks such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and Tiktokare potentially addictive, and individuals may spend too much time, effort and money on these networks which may put a strain on couple relationships as direct communication suffers. The study, however, contradicts a study by Garbarino (2004) that

claimed social media use had a significant impact on many happy marriages. He contends that social media is now widely used by people to connect and meet one another.

It was further revealed that family interferences in their children's marriage also plays a part in couple divorce. These are in line with the findings by Bolhari and Saberi[17] who found that parents and close relatives such as in-laws are highly regarded as a basis of quarrels among, especially young couples; however, the authors also admit that they can as well be a source of support.

Also, in this study, drug abuse has been found to be one of the factor to divorce among the couples in Zanzibar. Some couples are addicted and addicted people usually spend fewer time to socialize with their children and families. Hence, they leave their home responsibilities to peers who sometime have little capability and income or do not to support the family. Alcohol has ruined some homes in African families (Adegoke, 2010 cited in Love, 2014). It was further, this results in the misuse of social networking sites which negatively impact marriages and result in discord and in extreme cases divorce. Lupkin [15] similarly found that cyber-cheating has many effects on the real life relationship of the couples. It affects the deceived couples and even the family negatively. The deceived couples feel a sense of shame and guilt and lose their trust in the relationship with the deceiving partners.

In Zanzibar, it was discovered that infidelity among spouses ultimately led to divorce as it undermined trust in marriage. It was discovered through the interview that the typical definition of unfaithfulness/infidelity was a married individual having sex with someone other than the primary relationship. Sex and monetary gains were the main motivations. These results are consistent with a study by Mapfumo (2016) that revealed that adultery significantly contributes to divorce among married couples. The survey also showed that one would seek counselling services after being betrayed but, if it proved futile, divorce would be the only option left. Future research on comparable themes is advised to employ larger samples, more research sites, and dating couples to determine whether any patterns of infidelity that may be extended to younger people are continuous or discontinuous. According to the findings of this study, family interference in children's marriages and misuse of social networking, unfaithfulness/infidelity in marriage, psychological and emotional abuse, and drug abuse play a prime role in divorce among Zanzibar couples.

5. CONCLUSION

With respect to the results obtained in this study, it is generally concluded that divorce problem is at larger extent and participants are aware of the magnitude of the divorce and it occurs every day and everywhere in Zanzibar. Thus this is a serious problem among young couples and children. In addition, family interference of children marriage and social networking, immaturity, sexual dissatisfaction, psychological and emotional abuse, drug abuse, poverty, belief on financial expenditure, financial stress contributes more to divorce among Zanzibar people. This leads to majority of young couples to face frequently fights in their marriages hence influencing divorce. Furthermore, measures like legal, psychological, social, religious, cultural and educational measures were are suggested by both divorced people and Kadhis in Zanzibar whereby the major suggested measure was mediation and consultation should be done before the decision of divorce is made, moreover judgment are delay to give the chance to the couple to discuss their dilemma and rethink as well as provision of marriage education.

CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, Participants' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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