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# **Understanding Cultural Roles of Traditional Marriage Counsellors in Ng'ombe Compound of Zambia**

By

Samson Mwanza, Joseph Phiri, Akombelwa Muyangana and Agnes Chileshe Chibamba,

The University of Zambia

## **Abstract**

*This article emerged from a study that focused on exploring traditional marriage counsellors and the roles they played in marriage institutions in Ng'ombe compound of Zambia. The study was guided by communalism theory which places marriages and its institutions at the center of the “togetherness principle”, a philosophy that is highly practiced and respected in most African communities (Adamczak, 2017). The study was guided by the following objectives; (a) to assess the factors contributing to the rising cases of divorce in Ng'ombe compound and (b) to assess what areas traditional marriage counsellors offered counsel during premarital counselling and marital counselling sessions. Qualitative mode of inquiry as discussed by (Gupta & Gupta, 2011) was used to collect data through interviews and focus group discussions. The target population were all traditional Marriage Counsellors and married couples in Ngómbe Compound. The sample size was 40 respondents comprising thirty (30) married couples and ten (10) traditional marriage*

counsellors. Couples and traditional marriage counsellors were randomly selected using a simple random sampling technique. The qualitative data gathered from responded was analysed according to the emerging themes. The study revealed that the role of traditional marriage counsellors was to help spouses understand each other on various domestic matters, encourage openness in marriage, promote mutual relationships and to unit families. There were also factors that contributed to increased divorce cases such as lack of counselling services both premarital and marital counselling services, childlessness, beer drinking, unfaithfulness and family as well as friends' influences. It was also noted that areas in which traditional marriage counsellors offered pre-marital and marital counselling included couples' love for each other, respect for family members, faithfulness and infidelity, proper communication, conflict resolutions, maturity, and sexual satisfaction. The study recommended that married couples should involve marriage counsellors to help strengthen their marriages.

**Keywords:** Culture, Traditional Marriage, Counsellor, marriages.

## Background

The continuity of any community or society is partly dependent on reproduction through organized marriages. It is the desire of some human beings to marry, a common route to reproduction. Marriage is critical for

human existence as it is a back-bone route to recreation. This has for a long time been embedded in culture which is a bedrock of all communities (Mkandawire, Simooya and Monde, 2019). It is a common understanding that every society needs marriages and that any community that lacks marriage, its families are bound to fail (Chewe, 2013). The concept of marriage is the foundation and subsistence of the social unit in every society (Chilufya, 2008).. People do not marry because it is their social duty to perpetuate the institution of the family, but it is a necessity to them and their need to address some external force such as community or family pressure, religious scriptures on matrimony or other reasons. Others feel compelled to marry because they lived in a family as children and cannot get over the feeling that being in a family is the only proper and acceptable way to live a fulfilling life in the society (Katowa, 2011).

When humans marry, they form a social contract of marriage taking different forms in different societies based on their acceptable ways of living. In this regard, culture plays an important role as it influences how marriages are arranged across different societies (Mkandawire and Daka, 2018). In Zambia, there are principally two ways by which marriages are normally contracted. The first is marriage under the Statutory Provision (Marriage Act) and the second one is marriage under Zambian Customary law (Chitiya, 2006). Marriage under the Statutory Provision is primarily modeled after the British System. In Zambia, two people can engage into marriage contract and have it proclaimed by the registrar of marriage at the court of law or by a pastor or (priests) of religion.

Marriage under Customary law becomes valid only after acceptable traditional steps as accredited by that custom are taken. For example, one of the steps for a marriage to be valid is if the man has paid some form of dowry (lobola) to the family of the woman (Chondoka, 1998).

The major step of traditional marriage system is the premarital and marital counselling which is normally done by the traditional marriage counsellors and elders who are experienced and familiar with the traditions (Mapala, 2004). Counselling is part of informal or lifelong learning which couples receive from adults and this form of education is not part of the formal education system in Zambia as discussed by (Mkandawire, 2017) and emphasized by (Mkandawire and Illon, 2018). This form of training has helped to bond Zambian societies together by a common culture and also has given community distinct identities (Mkandawire, 2015). Most marriages' in Zambia despite being influenced by early missionaries of faith they go through the marriage counseling with traditional marriage counsellors locally known as Alangizi in Cinyanja language (Cichewa) or Banachimbusa in Bemba language. Others are counselled by pastors and experienced modern counselors. Traditional marriage counselors still play a critical role in marriages in Zambia and Ng'ombe compound in particular as they exhibit unique cultural knowledge to guide couples in various spheres (Mkandawire, 2018). It is understood from literature that traditional marriage counsellors play a significant role in marriage counselling but it is not clear what these people do exactly to help couples live peacefully in their marriages.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the existence of traditional marriage counsellors in Ng'ombe Compound of Lusaka District of Zambia, Ng'ombe compound is faced with a number of divorce cases. The latest statistics from the local court office, Zambia recorded 28,101 divorces across the country in 2017. Lusaka province recorded 3,325 divorce cases spread across compounds Ng'ombe inclusive. The current study wanted to establish the specific roles traditional marriage counselors played in guiding couples on marriage issues in Ng'ombe compound of Zambia in order to safeguard marriage institutions. This gap was the motivation for this study to be conducted.

## **Research Objectives**

This study sought to:

- (a) establish the roles of traditional marriage counsellors in Ng'ombe compound.
- (b) assess the factors contributing to the increase in divorce cases in Ng'ombe compound.
- (c) ascertain the curriculum offered by traditional marriage counsellors to couples.

## **Significance of the Study**

With increase in divorce cases in Lusaka District, the study may help the community of Ng'ombe compound to understand and guard against factors that increases divorce rate. The study may also help marriage counsellors to strengthen their curriculum when counselling couples as discussed by (Mulenga and Kabombwe, 2019).

## Theoretical framework of the study

This study was guided by the African Community Theory as discussed by Jackson (2003). Communism is understood as a system that integrate shared customs, beliefs, values and shared ownerships of communal entities. Communism stresses the fact that humans are social beings that demand interaction among the same community that share common values and principles. When sharing intergenerational beliefs and customs, communist believe that the older generation should play mentorship role to guide the younger generation. In this case, young couples marry and they seek guidance from elders such as marriage counsellors. This theoretical framework was important because it was concerned and dealt with the social institutions that are communal in nature and marriage was one of them. When marriages break down, families are affected, the society is also affected and consequently the nation at large is indirectly affected in some way.

### *Literature on Traditional Marriage Counsellors.*

Mapala (2004) conducted a study on marriages which aimed at determining the nature of traditional marriage counsellors in relation to the marriage institutions, and some of the major findings were that premarital counselling for Christian marriages reinforces superiority of male spouses over females, making a woman a passive dependent in marriage. This study did not look at the role counselors played in safeguarding marriages which this study is trying to address. Similarly a study by Simbotwe (2016) was aimed

at determining community perception of traditional marriage counsellors in the Lusaka district and finding out how traditional counsellors were accessed in Lusaka district. This study revealed that community members perceived traditional marriage counselling as a way of promoting ownership of marriages by couples and a way of interacting in a manner that develops their friendships.

Furthermore, Namonje (2016) also conducted a study whose purpose was to investigate the role played by both traditional and modern counselling services in reducing incidences of divorce among married couples in Kabwe district in Zambia. Namonje's study was based in urban Kabwe and looked at both traditional and modern counselling services if they helped in reducing incidences of divorce among married couples in the district. This study concluded that both traditional and modern counselling strategies have the same objectives in reducing incidences of divorce in Kabwe urban and both counselling approaches have valuable knowledge and information which can be used in order to create a more holistic counselling approach to Kabwe urban couples. A study conducted by Chondoka (1988) basically focused on marriage counselling as a tool for imparting traditional culture and beliefs which would assist couples not to depart from their ancestral inclinations. This study raised some issues that surround marriages but did not look at the role of traditional marriage counselors in safeguarding marriage institutions in Zambia. However, this study was not a duplicate of the studies conducted by the scholars mentioned above. None of them focused on investigating the role of traditional marriage counsellors in safeguarding marriage

institutions in Ng’ombe Compound of Lusaka district. Whereas, in this study the researchers were interested in investigating the role of traditional marriage counsellors in safeguarding marriage institutions in Zambia, Ng’ombe compound hence, the need to conduct a study.

Another study was conducted by Tembe (2010), in which the author cited a number of factors that led to divorce cases among couples and these included, unfaithfulness (extra marital affairs), lack of understanding of marriage, the quietness of the church on the issue of divorce among its members and the community at large, abuse of women by men also caused divorce. In addition, church members preferred to marry either by civil marriage or by customary union, culture and traditions as it encourages men to have more lovers and the mismanagement of money further causes divorce in the communities. The findings of the study furthermore, showed that the church to a lesser extent also contributed to causes of divorce cases by being quiet in the issues of divorce, lack of dating is also another cause of divorce, the abuse of the rights of women also causes divorce, the change of roles in the family is another cause of divorce and generally divorce among marriage couples is common among Christians and non-Christians in the community and the societies at large. Pastors who are not doing their jobs also cause divorce, premarital sex and children out of wedlock is another cause of divorce. This study was based in Namakgale and the findings of this study are only applicable in Namakgale and not in Ng’ombe compound in Lusaka district, but in this study the researchers focused on assessing the factors that cause divorce

cases among married couples in Ng'ombe compound.

Further, a study by Taylor (2006) also looked at the Cause and Consequences of Divorce in Zambia and the author looked at the Causes and Consequences of Divorce in Zambia in general and not to a specific area of Zambia as the case of this study in which the researchers were interested in assessing the factors contributing to divorce cases in Ng'ombe compound of Lusaka district. Tylor (2006) in his book, cited a number of factors that causes divorce in marriages at the national level. The cited causes by the author included, sexual matters broadly, such as reproduction, performance, and fidelity, infidelity and spousal abuse. Similarly, Mengo Violet in the Zambia Daily Mail of 8th February, 2018, indicated that the statistics of divorce cases in Zambia were alarming and Mengo further argued that the main cause of divorce in Zambia were, lack of intimacy, unrealistic expectations by both partners, abuse, extra marital affairs and unequal sexual appetite, infidelity, money issues, poor communication. However, none of two authors looked at the factors responsible for the divorce cases case Lusaka district in particular Ng'ombe compound, which this study is trying to address.

## **Methodology**

This study employed a qualitative mode of inquiry as discussed by (Gupta & Gupta, 2011) because data collection was through interviews, field notes and focus group discussion. The population for this study comprised all traditional marriage counsellors (Alangizi, banacimbusa and bashibukombe) and all married men

and women as well as elderly men and women in Ng'ombe compound. The sample size comprised of 40 respondents of which thirty (30) were married couples and ten (10) were traditional marriage counsellors. Couples and traditional marriage counsellors were purposely selected using a purposive sampling technique. Some traditional marriage counsellors and couples were involved in the study through snowball sampling where one participant helped researchers identify others.

The data was analyzed thematically by organizing the common themes or patterns that emerged from the responses of the participants so that appropriate conclusions can be made. The analysis of qualitative data varied from simple descriptive analysis to more elaborate reduction and multivariate associated techniques, raw data from interviews, field notes or focus group discussions and content analysis was subjected to the constant comparative analysis technique in order to reach the most significant themes of the topic under study.

## **Findings and Discussion**

The findings are presented based on the research objectives and subthemes that merged from the study.

### **The Roles of Traditional Marriage Counsellors**

The first research objective wanted to identify traditional marriage counsellors and the roles they played in safeguarding marriages in Ng'ombe compound. The findings were that traditional marriage counsellors played various roles in helping couples to live peacefully with their spouses. It was noted that the local people of Ng'ombe Compound called traditional

marriage counsellors by different names from various languages in Zambia such as banachimbusa, nkhoswe, bashimukombe and alangizi in local languages. When asked about the roles played by traditional marriage counselors, most respondents had this to say:

*traditional marriage counsellors played various roles that reflected what they offered in their curriculum such as guiding couples how to treat each other, how to behave to their spouses' families and friends, the language to use, the need to be open to one another, and the general life style, and others.*

The idea of offering various informal curriculum aspects is supported by Mulenga (2018) who observed that many times, trainers would want to follow and respect a curriculum given in a particular subject area regardless of the challenges or impediments such as those discussed by (Mkandawire, 2010) in implementing their curriculum. Other specific issues raised by respondents in the study have been put and discussed in themes below to help in the discussion process.

### *Counsellors Help Spouses in Understanding Each Other.*

It was clear from the knowledge obtained from the respondents that one of the roles of traditional marriage counsellors was to help married couples understand each other. The counsellors ensured that they emphasize to pre wedded couples that the key to successful marriage lies in the ability of couples to understand each other thoroughly. When a couple understands each other, they will be able to overcome the weakness of their spouses.

Understanding one another is a critical component of successfully marriage because this leads them to develop their own healthy marriages through learning about themselves, their spouses, and how each other contribute to the marriage both positively and negatively. For example, a traditional marriage counsellor reported that:

*In my counselling services, the aspect of teaching couples to learn to understand each other in their marriages as well as their relationships is one of the factors that has been helpful in laying a strong foundation for successful marriages. Today I boast of many successful marriages owing to the fact of preliminary knowledge of understanding each other.*

A couple that received traditional marriage counselling session on the importance of a couple understanding of each other, reported that:

*We really appreciate traditional marriage counsellor's services, it was through them that we learnt how to love and understand each other in our marriage, this has helped us to live happy together. When we quarrel and fight and also if other differences emerge, my partner and I know how to overcome by upholding the teachings we received from the traditional marriage counsellor.*

The findings are in line with Mapala (2004) study aimed at determining the role played by traditional marriage counsellors in relation to the marriage institution who noted that counsellors help couples to understand each other. Counselling of married coupled is a form of lifelong learning discussed

by (Mkandawire, Simooya and Monde, 2019).

### *Encourages Openness in Marriages.*

Another critical area in which traditional marriage counsellors offer counselling services was to promote openness between couples in marriage. Being open in marriage is critical, couples need to feel free to each other and share almost anything. The idea of keeping secrets is not encouraged by the traditional counsellors when offering counselling to couples. Therefore, the means of effective communication in marriages is highly promoted by traditional marriage counsellors. Furthermore, openness in marriages helps couples to clearly distinguish their different roles. This also helps them to overcome negative external influences which are likely to cause conflicts. When couples are open to each other, they will be solving conflict in a healthy manner and further foster commitment throughout their daily life in ways which improve their marriage. One traditional marriage counsellor stated that:

*One factor that has helped me to be considering the issue of openness in marriage more serious is the fact that I have seen most marriages ending due to inability of couples to fail to be fully open to each other. From that time, it is always my first priority to ensure that I inculcate knowledge in couples to be open in marriages. Openness leads to positive communication and positive communication in any marriage is one way of fostering prosperous marriages as it reduces chances of couples dragging each other to courts claiming their partners are not open to them.*

These findings are supported Simbotwe (2016) who noted that openness in marriages helps in resolving conflicts and promoting ownership of marriages by couples and a way of interacting in a manner that develops their friendships.

### *Counsellors Recommends the Use of Respectable and Friendly Language*

Respondents indicated that one of the roles of traditional marriage counsellors was to guide couples on the need to use respectable and friendly language to each other and the neighbors. Some of the respondents had this to say;

*...many times, we advise couples especially the young ones to use respectable form of language when greeting, discussing or sharing any issue in their marriage because the way one speaks to people in a society may talk more about them and the nature of that person. ... we do advise them that in a bedroom, a couple need to be creative in ways to communicate with the partner on various issues affecting them. The ways to communicate should be done in a way that it does not offend the other person willingly.*

They further indicated that in the event that one was offended, they should take responsibility and say “sorry for what I said”. The need to use respectable language in a community was emphasised by (Mkandawire and Mwanza, 2013) when they noted that a person is said to have grown based on the way they use their oral or spoken language to others in their book tagged ‘Growing Up is Manifested in Oral Literacy (Kukula Nkhayowoyelo’). The creative use of language by couples when

communicating ideas was also echoed by (Mkandawire, 2018) who observed that creativity in communication demand the use of various techniques or strategies to send a message. Furthermore, Mwansa (2016) reiterated that the social-cultural and economic contexts in which language is used should be considered. One of the respondents said that “our counsellors encouraged us to talk to our spouses with the respect that they deserve, even if they have offended us in some way”. Although language use varies according to the audiences, certain groups of people should use their language more consciously to preserve their interests (Banda and Mwanza, 2017).

### *Promote Mutual relationships in Marriages.*

It was clear from our findings that the other role of traditional marriage counsellors was to promote mutual relationships in marriages. To every couple out there, it is mutual relationships that contributes highly in overcoming bad vices brought into their marriages. Traditional marriage counselors ensure that married individuals should develop the power to develop mutual relationships and also control their marriage. One way of achieving this is inculcating in couples to interact to each other in the manner that enhances their friendships, this then reduces on unnecessary conflicts and stress. One married couple stated that:

*Through traditional marriage counselling we have learnt to develop a mutual relationship and also ownership of our marriage. More often, my partner and I spend time interacting as friends, even when there is a serious issue,*

*I would rather we sit down and discuss it and find possible solutions rather than keeping quiet and expect my partner to guess what am feeling inside. For instance, I reside in Ng'ombe and more often, I receive hearsays that my partner is cheating me with my neighbor's husband. I always openly face my partner on the matter through discussions and this helps me not to rely on false hearsays and stories.*

In the same way, a traditional married counsellor clearly stated that “Our teachings make women and men to develop and have mutual relations and ownership of their marriages and this means that these marriages have a less possibility of conflicts since the couple will live as friends”.

### *To Help Unite Two Family.*

Further, our findings showed that the other role of traditional marriage counsellors was to unite wedded families in a coherent manner. When two individuals are about to get married, it is the role of the traditional marriage counsellors to harmonize two families together. Thereafter, the counsellor will help the families on planning the possible and suited ways in which they can best live in the unions of souls.

Further, during the process of bonding families, traditional marriage counsellors normally stay with the woman to be married and seclude her from both families, this helps that the families’ concentration will be on the traditional marriage counsellor. When women traditional marriage counsellors are done preparing the woman, the two families, hence, are called to witness and prove

that she is ready to take up her role as a wife. However, this long process enables both families to interact and know each other even before the man and woman are formally joined together. In an interview with a married woman in Ng'ombe Compound, she stated that:

*Through the marriage counselling process of my daughter to be wedded, I knew how to take care of my in-laws and other members of my in-laws' family. During the process of counselling my daughter for marriage, my in laws used to come and hear what the traditional marriage counsellors wanted because I was the immediate contact apart for being the mother to the pre-wedded woman. During the process, I learnt that for as long as long as my daughter is married, her husband family and relatives are also part of my family and this has helped me to live in harmony with them without any misunderstandings, all because of traditional marriage counsellors. The findings and responses from different personnel's distinctively showed that their roles were divers and dynamics and included helping spouse understand each other, to encourage openness in marriages between couples, promote mutual relationship in marriages. To unite families during the process of counselling the pre wedded woman, this helps to safe guard marriage institutions and reduces divorce cases. These shows that traditional counsellors culturally literacy people that are a beacon in any community.*

## **Factors Contributing to the Increasingly Divorce Cases.**

The second question sought to establish the factors contributing to the increasingly divorce cases in Ng'ombe compound. The findings have been put in sub themes for easy presentation.

### *Lack of Marriage Counseling Services for couples (both Premarital and Marital Counseling)*

Responses indicated that lack of traditional marriage counseling both premarital and marital counseling was one of the major factor that has contributed to the increased divorce cases in Ng'ombe compound. Responses also indicated that many people in Ng'ombe today especially young men and women were just getting married to each other without even informing the parents and without being counseled so as to have relevant information for them to enjoy their marriage life. Traditional marriage counselling services are been considered as ancient teaching for aged people. For example, two interviewees reported the following in Nyanja language which was later translated:

*Ise alangizi timapokelela bazimai nabazi  
bamboo kuchokela muma komboni usana  
bofuna kupunzisiwa kulinganana monkalila  
muchikwati chabo bakalibe kugena muchikwati  
napamene balikudala muchikwati. Koma  
monga ano masiku yasiyanako nakudala,  
bambili batengana chabe nakukwatalana  
kopanda kubalola monkalila muchikwati.  
Kambili aba bamene bamakwatalana munjila*

*iyi vikwati vao sivimankala kwatau intali  
ninshi vasila chifukwa chakuti ababantu  
sibana loledwe monkalila muchikwati.*

Translated as:

As traditional marriage counsellors, we receive women and men from different compounds who come to access our services regarding premarital and marital traditional marriage counselling. But today it's different to the old days, most of the people they just get each other and marry without been counseled about how to live in marriage. Mostly those who just get each other in this manner, they marriages do not last long period of time because these people were not counseled or prepared for marriage life.

Another interviewee (man) also explained how his first five years marriage ended and this was due to the aspect of not receiving traditional marriage counselling services before they got married. The man reported the following: In my first marriage in which we were married with my wife for five years, we just got married without been counseled or receiving any marriage instructions on how to live in marriage as married couples. My job is driving and mainly when I am at home my wife did not know how to prepare food for me, how to respond to me as the husband and her in laws. We tried to stay in that marriage for five years and things did not change until we divorced. But today I am marriage to my second wife and I am able to see the differences with the first wife I was married to. With my second wife we attended both premarital and we seek marital counselling from time to time. We are happy now in our marriage with

my wife. Thanks to traditional marriage counsellors for their premarital and marital counselling services.

This suggests that counselling sessions helps in sustaining marriages in the target area. It is important to note that having marital counselling sessions is not always a solution to happy or lasting marriages.

### *Unfaithfulness and Lack of Intimacy Among Married Couples*

Respondents indicated that today many married men are having multiple sexual partners due to lack of sexual intimacy in marriage which leads to being unfaithful and in return leading to divorce. Sometimes married men even have affairs with young ladies whose age can be the same as their own children. Married women as well are into relationships with young men whom they are not married to for them to be sexually satisfied and this aspect of unfaithfulness to each other has increased divorce cases in Ng'ombe. Respondents further indicated that modernity has acted as a catalyst to unfaithfulness among married couples especially the misuse of phones, many married couples have learnt to cheat using phones. One interviewee (woman) reported the following:

*I am talking from experience with my first husband. We stayed together in marriage for seven years. But things started changing in our marriage with my husband who started sleeping out anyhow with no reasons and things became worse especially when he bought his telephone. He became more unfaithful and always on social media like*

*facebook chatting with young girls and sending nude pictures. Even if he was at home, he was busy chatting with other women on his telephone. I became tired of catching him ready-handed with women, finding unpleasant text messages in his phone and nude pictures. Even if you have a forgiving heart for how long can one be? At last my husband left me for woman who is of the age her own daughter.*

Another interviewee (man) also reported the following in a summarised way: I was married to my first wife whom I loved so much but with her it was the opposite. I was providing everything for her, I was providing everything that she needed in our marriage. But every time I left home to go for work she used to bring other men in our matrimonial bed with allegations that I do not satisfy her sexually. My neighbours used to tell me about what my wife used to do most of the times when I go for work, I never listened to them. One day I was called by my neighbour to come home without my wife knowing and I found my wife with another man in the act in our matrimonial bed. From that incidence until now I will never trust any woman. Especially in this generation of phones and other material desire of women, women have become more unfaithful to their partners. In marriage they should be love, trust, faithfulness, care, respect, understanding and forgiveness. But if in marriage there is no love, respect, care, understanding, forgiveness and trust it leads to unfaithfulness and that marriage in return will lead to divorce.

## *Beer Drinking*

Too much of alcohol consumption emerged as one of the themes and one of the factors which has greatly contributed to the increased divorce cases in Ng'ombe compound. Respondents showed that alcohol has a great influence in marriages today and many married couples today drink beer to the extremes. If it is not the husband, then it is the wife who is a drunkard. Respondents stated that alcoholism has destroyed many marriages in recent times. One interviewee a (traditional marriage counselor) reported the following:

These days there is too much consumption of beer and this has ruined a number of marriages in Ng'ombe compound. Both men and women are into drinking too much such that if it is for a man they even fail to provide for their family like paying rent, taking care of the wife, and children's well-being, beer drinking for a married man bamankala monga nichipuba chabe (they became like mad people). Due to too much drinking of alcohol a number of alcohol takers loose self-control such that one may have multiple sexual partners, contract sexual transmitted disease, others beat their wives when they are drunk as well demand for food in which they did not leave any money at home to buy food, they finish their monthly earns on alcohol which leads to poverty and divorce as the end results. While other men they fail to perform in bed or they fail to satisfy their partners. For women who drink, they lose self-control and can easily be sexually abused by other men to whom they are not married too. Due to these problems which come as a result of too much alcohol intake, married

couples resort to divorce because one partner becomes fed up of the other and see no put of being in marriage.

Similarly another interviewee (man) also reported that following :

*My first wife used to drink beer too much and she never used to do her home chores as marriage a woman is supposed to do. Every time for her its beer drinking and going in centres of beer to dance as if like she is not a married women with a house and children. And if it a woman who drinks, they is less control any man can abuse her sexually. I tried, my parents tried and other elderly family members tried to control her behaviour she did not change. I am telling you for a woman who drinks and who goes to beer halls to dance, she is not a woman who you can stay with at home. That means that you are not married. As at now as we are talking we are divorced due to my wife's uncontrolled drinking and up to date she is not yet married, she is working in a beer hall as a beer sales lady as we talking.*

### *Family and Friends Influence in Marriage*

Respondents indicated that family interference and friends influence either from the man's family or friends or from the woman's family and friends have contributed to the increasingly divorce cases in Ng'ombe compound today. To some married couples it's the man's family and friends who have the influence in one's marriage. Especially if the man works, mainly the family members

of the man think that he has abandoned them and he has concentrated much on his wife and the wife relatives. Other it is the woman's family and friends who have a greater influence and interference in marriage which in return leads to divorce among married couples. One respondent (traditional marriage counsellor) reported the following:

*"My daughter was married for two years only. The husband was working but my daughter was not working. Now the problem was that her mother in-law never wanted his son to marry fast, he wanted his son to marry after five years of working she wanted his son to marry someone with money. Both his parents were working in government but they still demanded for money from their son who married my daughter. My daughter did not even know how much the husband's monthly salary was. When my daughter is being visited by her in laws, her mother in law refused to eat her food and made allegations that my daughter can poison her. I am a marriage Counselor and I counseled my daughter how to leave in marriage but her in laws did not want my daughter. She used to say that my daughter is marriage to his all because of money only. So she wanted his son to marry someone with money too, she used to say 'Money on money'. My daughter suffered a lot in her marriage, her in laws brought another woman whom they said should marry his son because she had money as well while my daughter was still there, until my daughter was divorced."*

## *Childlessness in Marriage*

Respondents stated that the basis of marriage in our society was to have children. Children are for the continuity of the society and the name of the family and if you are not having children for a period of two to three years from the time you got married, it becomes a problem. A number of households today have been destroyed due to the aspect of not having children. One interviewee (woman) reported the following:

*I was left by my husband because from the time we got married we never had a child. My husband used to say that I am the one with a problem because he had a child before we got married with another woman. We tried and went for prayers, witchdoctors so that we have a child it did not work out, at the hospital we were told we are all capable of having children and we were told to be patient. But my husband used to shout and tease me that am barren and I cannot give him a child. Due to his desire to have child, he started having an affair with another woman who became pregnant for him and I was divorced by my husband. But as for now I also have a child with another man to whom I am married to.*

Similarly another interviewee reported that a number of marriages ended due to lack of children. couple has already made up their minds for divorce to take place. With the issue of not having children, most uncounselled couples end their marriages.

## *Factors Contributing to divorce cases*

The findings here revealed that divorce cases were increasing in Ngómbe due to several factors such as lack of traditional marriage counselling services, childless, unfaithful among married couples, beer drinking and influence from the family members and friends. It was also revealed that due to these factors, a number of marriages in Ng'ombe compound have been ruined. The factors raised here are in line with Mengo (2018) who reported that there were several factors that led to divorce and these include sexual matters such as lack of sexual intimacy and unfaithfulness in marriage, alcoholism, lack of counselling both premarital and marital counselling, childless and family as well as friends interference have ruined a number of marriages in Zambia. Mengo further emphasized that counselling services helps to prepare individuals who were to enter marriage and those who were already in marriage on how to live in marriage for long period of time. This is because the marriage counsellors give information and marriage life. These views were supported by Namonde (2016) who noted that divorce cases in urban areas were caused by violence, financial problems, infidelity, sexual problems, poor communication and childlessness. Tembo (2010) study also revealed that divorce cases were caused by unfaithfulness as well as overdrinking of beer by a man or a woman. Awareness of cultural factors via informal education such as myths and taboos as forms of counselling can help reduce divorce cases (Mkandawire, Simooya and Monde, 2017).

## **Curriculum Topics where Traditional Marriage Counsellors Offered Counselling Services**

The third question wanted to establish the areas in which traditional marriage counsellors offer counselling services during premarital and marital counselling services in Ng'ombe compound. The findings have been put in categories or sub themes for easy presentation. The following themes or outcomes emerged as the areas in which traditional marriage counsellors offered counselling services.

### *Need for Mutual Love*

Responses emerged from the interviewees stated that one of the areas in which traditional marriage counselors offer counselling was mutual love for partners. Love is one of the foundations of marriage institutions. The main issue emphasized is that before couples take in vows, they have to be convinced by their heart that they love their spouse. If couples love each other, even the differences that may have in their marriage can be overshadowed by the inherit love. For example, one couple stated that;

*We have been married for over thirty years, what has been driving our marriages through hardships is the fact that we love each other. In fact, we both have undergone through the traditional counselling services. The traditional counselor emphasized to us if we truly love each other and further showed us ways in which we can nurture and harness our love for each.*

Love might indeed contribute to a lasting relationship but it is hard to measure on who loves whom. There

could have been other factors that could have contributed to the respondent's experience in marriage.

### *Respect for Each Other and Family Members*

Respect was stressed in the curriculum in various ways: firstly, couples were urged to develop respect each other. Respect between couples themselves helped strengthen the bond which is already there. Secondly, respect should be applied to members of the family which include relatives of spouses regardless of their economic background and status in the society. A traditional counsellor stated that;

*Many couples don't know how to handle respect to themselves, families and relatives, however, many couples whom I have taught issues of marriage have really appreciated my generosity knowledge. A marriage where there is no respect is doomed to fail. Hence, I ensure that respect as a critical area in which I offer services is critically understood especially for couples living in Lusaka because they think respect should only be given to people with higher economic status. Little do they realise that this in most cases leads to divorce in marriages.*

### *Faithfulness and Infidelity*

The findings also showed that another important area in which traditional marriage counsellors offer pre-marital and marital counselling was faithfulness and infidelity. For any marriage to strive, partners need to be faithful to each other in all matters especially the

issue of not engaging in extra marital sexual activities. Unfaithfulness on the other hand is the leading cause of divorce in Ng'ombe compound, hence, many couples were trained in ways which prevented infidelity such as not sexually satisfying your partner when having sex. Traditional marriage counsellors ensured that couples were taught ways of how they can prevent infidelity such as giving in to the desire of your partner in all matters including the issue of sexual intercourse.

### *Proper Communication*

This was a critical component of the curriculum in the sense that a minor issue could cause problems in the absence of proper communication. One counsellors indicated the following “I always include communication in my counselling sessions because of its centrality”. An ideal marriage is found on basis of effective communication. Married people need to understand each other including the best way to communicate to one another under different circumstances. In marriages, communication was not just verbal, it also involved analyzing non-verbal actions or other means in which messages are sent. This creativity in sending messages from one point to another is what (Mwanza, 2017) called eclecticism. The communication component in the curriculum gets very hot when discussing to the extent that it becomes harder to respect and effectively comprehend. Due to the emphatic nature that is placed on communication, some couples may think in retrospect and that it is a challenging topic to address in marriage with extended families present

(Chileshe, Mkandawire and Tambulukani, 2018). To add on, couples should also know how to communicate with their in-laws under different circumstances.

### *Conflicts Resolutions*

The finding also showed that another area in which traditional marriage counsellor offer counselling services was how conflicts should be best resolved in homes. Traditional marriage counsellor had observed that most couples in Ng'ombe compound entered marriage institution without adequate knowledge in matters relating to conflicts resolutions. This trend contributed to higher rate of divorce cases in the target area. Hence, counselors ensured that knowledge in solving conflict is inculcated in the curriculum for counselling couples. A certain woman reported that;

*The memories of my husband are still in my heart, my late husband was a generous man in handling conflicts in our home. He used to make sure that instead of being listened to, he ensured that he listens carefully to the pressing issue burning in my heart. One thing is that he also chose the right time when we could solve the problem in our house. Further he was so honest and apologetic if he is the one way in a wrong position. These were the skills he obtained from traditional marriage counsellors.*

This is why this topic was necessary to be included in the curriculum. It should be observed that the issue of conflict resolution is prominent in most adult related lifelong education programmes

in Zambia (Mkandawire and Tambulukani, 2017).

### *Maturity*

Maturity is the ability to speak, behave or address an issue in a respectable way. This was included in the curriculum because it encompasses many areas such as self-centeredness, hypercritical behavior, impatient, and unnecessary competition status. Many couples were not adequately counseled in matters of maturity, it is not all about the growth of sexual organs that lender ones to be mature. Maturity has to do with how well couples handle marriage issues. In an interview, a woman had this to report:

*In my first marriage, I was not mature enough to handle issues with my husband, hence, in 2010 we divorced with my husband. However, I appreciate the services done by the traditional marriage counsellor for I have learnt how to be mature in all matters of marriage all because of traditional marriage counsellors.*

### *Sexual Satisfactions*

The traditional marriage counsellors in Ng'ombe also address the issue of sexual fulfilment in marriage. This was an important area in counselling services. Many marriages in the area ended up in divorce because of one or both of the couples were not being satisfied sexually. The trend of not experiencing satisfaction in the homes, married individuals resorted to extra marital affairs with a view that they would find the satisfaction not received in their marital homes. Therefore, traditional marriage counsellors ensured that they impart knowledge of

how best couples can satisfy each other needs sexually.

## Conclusion

The study noted that traditional counsellors are identified through snowball techniques where one person tells another until the get to the end point. The article has also shown that traditional marriage counsellors played various roles in safeguarding marriage institutions in Ng'ombe compound such as advising them to understand each other, talking about issues, being open and others. Although traditional counsellors are not part of the formal education system as discussed by (Mkandawire & Lynn, 2019), their informal education to couples of Ng'ombe are helping in safeguarding marriages in people's homes. The paper also raised various factors contributing to the raising divorces in Ng'ombe compound such as unfaithfulness in marriages, excessive beer drinking, laziness and others. It was also noted that traditional marriage counsellors offered counsel during pre-marital and marital counselling services in various areas that could help in consolidating marriages.

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