

**LIVED EXPERIENCES OF DIVORCED PERSONS ON
LIFELONG LEARNING COUNSELING ISSUES IN LUSAKA
DISTRICT, ZAMBIA**

BY

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THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
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(Stabile Namwai Ngambi)

DEDICATION

In profound remembrance and heartfelt gratitude, this dissertation is dedicated to the cherished memory of my late mother, Evelyn Phakamisa Ngambi. During my formative years, your unwavering encouragement echoed, "My daughter, pursue education, become self-reliant, and care for your younger brothers." Your words, though you are no longer with us, reverberate in every moment of my life. To my beloved and hardworking father, Joseph Ngambi, may you continue to rest in peace. Your instructions and encouragement to complete my education have been fulfilled.

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study conducted in Lusaka District, Zambia, explores the lived experiences of divorced individuals to understand the role of counseling and lifelong learning in sustaining marriages. Using a hermeneutic phenomenological design, the research aimed to identify the root causes of divorce, assess the effectiveness of existing marriage counseling programs, and pinpoint lifelong learning components critical for marriage sustainability. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed via thematic analysis, revealing that infidelity, infertility, lack of emotional and financial support, diminished respect and trust, substance abuse, and excessive attention to mobile phones are significant contributors to marital breakdowns. These factors erode mutual understanding and support, undermining marital harmony. The study found that current marriage counseling programs typically focus on blending family dynamics, personal hygiene, communication, home management, and sex education. However, significant gaps were identified, especially in addressing infidelity, financial stress, and emotional support. This highlights the need for counseling frameworks that are more attuned to the complexities of married life. The implications of the study suggest that marriage counseling should integrate comprehensive, culturally relevant, and holistic approaches that include enhancing financial management skills, emotional intelligence, and communication techniques. Such strategies are essential for fostering resilience in marriages. Furthermore, the research emphasizes the importance of continuous learning and adaptation in marriage counseling, proposing regular updates to counseling methods and content to reflect the evolving dynamics of marital relationships. To improve the sustainability of marriages, the study recommends the integration of ongoing educational programs that address both theoretical and practical aspects of marriage. These programs should cover conflict resolution, financial planning, and the impact of technology on relationships, while also promoting respect for cultural influences on marriage. In conclusion, the study offers valuable insights into the divorce phenomenon in Zambia and suggests ways to enhance marriage counseling and education programs. By adopting an integrated and culturally sensitive approach, these programs can better support couples in developing the resilience needed to maintain their marriages, ultimately aiming to transform marriage counseling into a more dynamic, responsive, and comprehensive service that supports couples in facing current and future marital challenges.

Keywords: Divorce, Lifelong Learning, Marriage Counseling, Phenomenological Research

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|--------------|
| COPYRIGHT | i |
| DECLARATION | ii |
| CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL | iii |
| DEDICATION | iv |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | v |
| ABSTRACT | vi |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | vii |
| LIST OF TABLES | xvi |
| LIST OF FIGURES | xvii |
| ACRONMY | xviii |
| CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 1.1. Overview | 1 |
| 1.2. Background of the Study | 1 |
| 1.3. Statement of the Problem..... | 3 |
| 1.4. Purpose of the study..... | 4 |
| 1.5. Specific Objectives of the study | 4 |
| 1.7. Significance of the Study | 5 |
| 1.8 Contribution of the Study..... | 6 |
| 1.9. Delimitations of the Study | 7 |
| 1.10. Definition of Terms..... | 8 |
| 1.11. Theoretical Framework..... | 9 |
| 1.11.1. Social Constructionist Theory..... | 9 |
| 1.11.2. Attachment Theory | 9 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1.11.3. Humanistic Theory..... | 9 |
| 1.11.4. Adult Learning..... | 10 |
| 1.11.5. Integration and Justification of Theories | 10 |
| 1.11. Chapter Summary | 11 |
| CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW..... | 12 |
| 2.1 Overview..... | 12 |
| 2.1.1 Scope and Relevance | 13 |
| 2.1.2 Contextual Background | 14 |
| 2.2 Divorce Dynamics: Understanding Root Causes..... | 18 |
| 2.2.1 Global Perspectives on Divorce..... | 20 |
| 2.2.2 Sociocultural Factors Influencing Divorce in Zambia..... | 23 |
| 2.2.3 Personal and Psychological Factors..... | 24 |
| 2.3 Evaluation of Existing Marriage Counseling Programs | 27 |
| 2.3.1 Content and Structure of Current Programs..... | 27 |
| 2.3.2 Effectiveness and Limitations..... | 28 |
| 2.3.3 Recommendations for Improvement..... | 29 |
| 2.4 Lifelong Learning in Marriage Counseling | 30 |
| 2.4.1 Key Themes in Lifelong Learning..... | 30 |
| 2.4.2 Integration into Counseling..... | 33 |
| 2.5 Development of a Comprehensive Counseling Framework | 34 |
| 2.5.1 Framework Foundations | 34 |
| 2.5.2 Proposed Framework for Zambia | 36 |
| 2.6 Comparative Analysis: Lessons from Other Regions. | 37 |
| 2.6.1 Lessons from Global Successes | 38 |
| 2.6.2 Tailoring Approaches to Zambian Needs | 39 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 2.6.3 Strategic Implementation and Evaluation | 40 |
| 2.6.4 Adapting Lessons to the Zambian Context..... | 40 |
| 2.7. Implications for Future Research and Practice | 41 |
| 2.8. Summary of Chapter two..... | 42 |
| CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY | 43 |
| 3.1 Overview..... | 43 |
| 3.2 Philosophical Paradigm and its Justification | 43 |
| 3.3. Research Design..... | 45 |
| 3.3.1. Phenomenological Research Design..... | 46 |
| 3.4. Study Population..... | 48 |
| 3.4.1. Methods of Participant Selection to the study population | 48 |
| 3.4.1.1. Universe Population..... | 48 |
| 3.4.1.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria..... | 49 |
| 3.5. Sample Size..... | 49 |
| 3.6 Sampling procedure | 50 |
| 3.6.1 Typical case purposive sampling procedure | 50 |
| 3.6.2 Snowball Sampling | 50 |
| 3.6.3. Sample Size Determination..... | 50 |
| 3.7 Data Generation | 51 |
| 3.7.1 Instrument – Semi-structured interview guide..... | 52 |
| 3.7.2. Semi-structured Interview Guide Format: | 53 |
| 3.7.3. Interview Question Development | 53 |
| 3.8. Data Generation Procedure | 55 |
| 3.8.1. Semi-structured Interviews | 55 |
| 3.8.2 Informed Consent..... | 55 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 3.8.3 Interview Setting..... | 55 |
| 3.8.4 Questioning techniques..... | 55 |
| 3.8.5 Researcher's Role..... | 56 |
| 3.8.6 Monitoring Data Saturation..... | 56 |
| 3.8.7 Determining Data Saturation..... | 57 |
| 3.9. Ethical Considerations..... | 58 |
| 3.10 Data Analysis..... | 59 |
| 3.10.1 Thematic Analysis..... | 60 |
| 3.10.1.1 Transcript..... | 60 |
| 3.10.3: Familiarization..... | 65 |
| 3.10.4. Coding..... | 69 |
| 3.10.5. Defining and naming themes..... | 72 |
| 3.10.6. Report writing..... | 73 |
| 3.11. Chapter Summary..... | 75 |
| CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS..... | 76 |
| 4.1. Overview..... | 76 |
| 4.1.1. Demographic data..... | 76 |
| 4.2 Root Causes of Divorce..... | 77 |
| 4.2.1. Emergent of themes on root causes of divorce within marital relationships..... | 78 |
| 4.2.2 Communication problems..... | 101 |
| 4.2.3. Lack of Commitment to Spiritual Values..... | 102 |
| 4.2.4. Behavior and Attitude Issues..... | 102 |
| 4.2.5. Family and Friends Interference..... | 103 |
| 4.2.6. Irreversible Breakdown..... | 104 |
| 4.2.7. Unwillingness to Change..... | 105 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 4.2.8. Adultery and Marriage Stability | 107 |
| 4.2.9. Ongoing Extramarital Affairs | 108 |
| 4.2.10. Childbearing..... | 109 |
| 4.2.11. Suspicions of infidelity as a cause of divorce..... | 110 |
| 4.2.12. Home Abandonment | 111 |
| 4.2.13. Rape | 112 |
| 4.2.14. Behavioral Responses | 112 |
| 4.2.15. Engaging in Flirting and Entertaining Advances..... | 113 |
| 4.2.16. The Lack of Ongoing Learning..... | 114 |
| 4.2.17. Technology and Privacy Issues..... | 115 |
| 4.2.18. Financial Strain | 116 |
| 4.2.19. Lack of Emotional Support..... | 117 |
| 4.2.20. Lack of Respect..... | 118 |
| 4.2.21 Lack of Trust..... | 119 |
| 4.2.22. Substance Abuse and Addiction | 120 |
| 4.2.23. Physical and Mental Abuse..... | 121 |
| 4.2.24. Employment Issues and Marital Dissolution | 123 |
| 4.3. Existing Content of Marriage Counseling Programs | 123 |
| 4.3.1. Emergent Themes on Existing Content of Current Marriage Counseling Programs | 123 |
| 4.3.2. Improved Conflict Resolution Strategies for Marital Counseling. | 158 |
| 4.3.3. Navigating Blended Family Dynamics..... | 159 |
| 4.3.4. The Value of Personal Hygiene and Appearance in Marital Satisfaction. | 160 |
| 4.3.5. Effective Communication is Essential for Marital Harmony. | 161 |
| 4.3.6. Respect is a fundamental element in marital dynamics. | 161 |
| 4.3.7. Comprehensive Home Management..... | 163 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 4.3.8. In-depth Sex Education..... | 164 |
| 4.3.9. Financial Management Challenges for Unity. | 165 |
| 4.3.10. Promoting Zero Infidelity and the Value of Marriage Protection..... | 166 |
| 4.3.11. Oneness as the Foundation of Marriage..... | 167 |
| 4.3.12. Strategic In-laws Management | 167 |
| 4.3.13. The Crucial Role of Confidentiality in Marital Relationships..... | 168 |
| 4.4 Lifelong Learning Issues in Marriage Counseling for Marital Sustainability | 169 |
| 4.4.1 Emergence of Themes on Lifelong Learning Issues in Marriage Counseling..... | 169 |
| 4.4.2. Dealing with Financial Issues in Marriages..... | 185 |
| 4.4.3.: Technology and Privacy. | 186 |
| 4.4.4. Cultural Influences and Their Impact on Marital Sustainability | 187 |
| 4.4.5. Addressing the Impact of Witchcraft Beliefs on Marriages. | 189 |
| 4.4.6. Matron Selection and Belief in God. | 190 |
| 4.4.7. Spiritual and Charmed Objects in Marriages..... | 191 |
| 4.4.8. Relationship with In-Laws..... | 192 |
| 4.4.9. Gender Roles and Expectations. | 192 |
| 4.4.10. Incorporating Spirituality into Counseling. | 194 |
| 4.4.11. Infidelity Awareness. | 195 |
| 4.4.12. Mutual Respect and Consideration in Marriages..... | 197 |
| 4.4.13. Oneness in Decision-Making..... | 198 |
| 4.4.14. Selflessness in marriage..... | 200 |
| 4.4.15. Faithfulness and Trust as Lifelong Learning Issues in Marriage Counseling for Marital Sustainability..... | 201 |
| 4.4.16. Lifelong Learning in Marriage..... | 202 |
| 4.4.17 Effective Communication and Honesty..... | 202 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| 4.4.18. Deceptive Behavior..... | 202 |
| 4.4.19. A Comprehensive Approach to Resolving Marital Issues | 203 |
| 4.4.20. Understanding the Impact of Childhood Trauma | 204 |
| 4.4.21. Flirting and Entertaining Advances | 204 |
| 4.4.22. Individual Differences and Reactions in Marriage. | 205 |
| 4.4.23. Lack of Knowledge..... | 205 |
| 4.4.24. Mental Health and Ministry..... | 207 |
| 4.4.25. Cultural Practices in Marriages..... | 208 |
| 4.4.26. Physical Abuse in Marriage | 209 |
| 4.4.27. Tackling Substance Abuse in Marriage Counseling..... | 209 |
| 4.4.28. Sexual Education | 210 |
| 4.5. Theoretical Framework and Its Link to Findings | 211 |
| 4.5.1. Social Constructionist Theory Social Constructionist Theory (SCT), | 211 |
| 4.5.2. Attachment Theory Attachment..... | 211 |
| 4.5.3. Humanistic Theory..... | 212 |
| 4.5.4. Adult Learning Theory | 212 |
| 4.6. Summary of Findings..... | 213 |
| CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION..... | 214 |
| 5.1 Overview..... | 214 |
| 5.2 Discussion of Major Themes Contributing to Divorce..... | 214 |
| 5.3. Discussion on Existing Content of Marriage Counseling Programs | 225 |
| 5.4. Discussion on Lifelong Learning Issues in Marriage Counseling for Marital Sustainability | 241 |
| 5.6. Summary of the Chapter | 253 |
| Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations | 255 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| 6.1 Conclusion | 255 |
| 6.1.1. Synthesis of Key Findings | 255 |
| 6.2. Recommendations..... | 263 |
| 6.3. Comprehensive Model for Reducing Divorce Rates through a Phased Approach | 271 |
| 6.4 Areas of Further Research | 273 |
| 6.4.1. Longitudinal Studies on Counseling Program Effectiveness..... | 273 |
| 6.4. Exploring Under-Researched Causes of Divorce | 273 |
| 6.4.3. Comparative Studies across Different Contexts | 273 |
| 6.4.4. The Role of Education and Economic Stability..... | 274 |
| 6.4.5. Impact of Childhood Experiences and Family Background | 274 |
| 6.4.6. Technology and Privacy in Marriages | 274 |
| 6.4.7. Integrating Mental Health Support into Marriage Counseling | 274 |
| 6.4.8. Cultural Practices and Marital Stability | 275 |
| 6.4.9. Gender Roles and Expectations | 275 |
| 6.4.10. Prevention and Early Intervention Strategies | 275 |
| 6.5. Limitation of the study..... | 276 |
| 6.6 Final thoughts..... | 277 |
| 6.7. Chapter summary..... | 279 |
| REFERENCES..... | 281 |
| APPENDICES | 311 |
| Appendix A: Interview Guide for Persons Who Experienced Divorce | 311 |
| Appendix B: Certificate of Informed Consent..... | 322 |
| Appendix C: Research Budget..... | 323 |
| Appendix D: Comprehensive timeline | 325 |

Appendix E: International Journal Popular Literature on Post-Divorce Traumatic Experiences 327

Appendix F: Journal: Causes Of Divorce Based On Lived Experience of Divorced PERSONS
IN LUSAKA, ZAMBIA. 333

LIST OF TABLES

| | |
|---|-----|
| Table 4. 1. Description of Participants Profile .Source (Author)..... | 76 |
| Table 4. 2. The Root Causes of Divorce in Marital Relationships. Source (Author) | 78 |
| Table 4. 3. The existing content and structure of current marriage counseling programs. Source (Author)..... | 124 |
| Table 4. 4. Lifetime learning concerns that should be prioritized in marriage counseling in order to improve marriage sustainability. Sources (author)..... | 169 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| Figure 6. 1 Schedule | 325 |
|----------------------------|-----|

ACRONMY

| | |
|-----------|---|
| BBV: | Bracketing Versus Pre-supposition |
| CBT: | Cognitive Behavior Therapy |
| COVID-19: | Coronavirus Disease 2019 |
| CMT: | Condition of Marriage Therapy |
| EFT: | Emotion-Focused Therapy |
| EF: | Therapeutic Efficacy |
| EIFEA: | Engaging in Flirting and Entertaining Advances |
| ICF: | Informed Consent Form |
| LLM: | Lifelong Learning and Marital Stability |
| MCR: | Marital Conflict and Resolution |
| OEA: | Ongoing Extramarital Affairs |
| PPJ: | Philosophical Paradigm and its Justification |
| SCT: | Social Constructionist Theory |
| SFBT: | Solution-Focused Brief Therapy |
| UAETRA: | UAE Telecommunications Regulatory Authority |
| UNESCO: | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Overview

This chapter begins an in-depth investigation of the multidimensional nature of divorce in Zambia, emphasizing the critical roles of counseling and continuous education in assisting individuals to maintain their marital relationships. It investigates the sociocultural dynamics of divorce, namely how society norms and cultural beliefs influence the lives of those concerned. The debate emphasizes the role of therapy and lifelong learning in promoting mental health, personal growth, and acquiring necessary skills for managing the transition from marriage to post-divorce life. This section identifies the study's issue of inquiry, objectives, and guiding questions, delineates the scope, defines key concepts, outlines the theoretical basis and constraints, and examines the study's significance for the fields of counseling and lifelong learning.

It provides critical context to comprehend the impact of divorce on individuals in Zambia from both personal and social perspectives, adding to our present knowledge of the emotional, social, and psychological elements of divorce (Zulu and Malama, 2021).

1.2. Background of the Study

The concept of lifelong learning plays a pivotal role in addressing contemporary educational and societal challenges, transcending national and cultural boundaries. It has been recognized as a key driver for personal and societal development across various global contexts, underpinned by significant historical milestones such as its formal recognition in Denmark in 1971 and influential UNESCO reports like "Learning to Be" and "Learning: The Treasure Within" (UNESCO, 2015).

Globally, lifelong learning is acknowledged for its universal relevance in fostering resilience and adaptability across diverse cultures. However, its roots in Zambia and the broader African context predate external influences like colonialism, emphasizing traditional educational practices that have long supported communal and individual growth (Mwanakatwe, 2012; Kabaso, 2019). These indigenous educational systems have historically integrated comprehensive life skills training from childhood through adulthood, preparing individuals for societal and familial roles.

In exploring the application of lifelong learning to marriage and divorce, it becomes evident that such educational frameworks are crucial not only in Zambia but also across different African regions like Zimbabwe, Egypt, Nigeria, and Kenya. These countries, each with distinct cultural and societal dynamics, report varying impacts of marital challenges on their communities. For instance, studies in these regions highlight how inadequate marriage counseling and education on familial roles significantly contribute to rising divorce rates, affecting societal stability and individual well-being (Amoateng & Heaton, 2014; Kaslow, 2013).

Specifically, in Zambia's Kabwata area, the sharp increase in divorce rates, as highlighted by local statistics (Zambia Daily Mail, 2023), underscores a critical gap in the effectiveness of current marriage counseling programs. For example, Zambia recorded 28,001 divorce cases in 2017, 22,000 in 2021, and a sharp rise to 31,000 in 2022. This escalating trend not only threatens the traditional view of marriage as a lifelong commitment but also poses potential long-term consequences on national and regional development goals, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals on societal well-being and gender equality.

The focus on Kabwata, a locale within Lusaka, arises from its representation of both urban modernization and traditional Zambian values, making it a unique case study to explore the effectiveness of lifelong learning in addressing marital issues. The choice of this area reflects a strategic intent to understand and develop interventions that are culturally and contextually relevant, aiming to bridge the gap between traditional marital expectations and contemporary challenges.

This study aims to delve deeper into the causes of divorce in Kabwata, evaluate the content of existing marriage counseling programs, and propose enhancements that incorporate a lifelong learning perspective. By doing so, it seeks to contribute to the development of more robust educational and counseling frameworks that can sustain marriages not only in Zambia but in similar contexts globally, thereby supporting broader efforts to maintain social stability and enhance personal development.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

The institution of marriage, traditionally seen as a lifelong commitment, is facing mounting challenges due to escalating divorce rates in Zambia. These statistics not only indicate a domestic concern but also mirror broader regional and global patterns that pose threats to family cohesion and societal harmony. As per a study published in the *Zambian Journal of Sociology* (January 2023) [1], the nation witnessed 28,001 divorce cases in 2017. While this number slightly decreased to 22,000 in 2021, it sharply rose to 31,000 by 2022. These fluctuations underscore systemic issues within marriage support mechanisms, particularly in the realm of marital counseling.

This escalating trend of marital dissolutions poses significant ramifications at multiple levels. Nationally, the increasing divorce rates could lead to a higher prevalence of single-parent households, impacting the socio-economic stability of the broader community. Regionally, as African societies with similar cultural backgrounds observe these trends, there could be a ripple effect, influencing marital norms and practices across borders. Globally, the failure to address these issues aligns poorly with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and Goal 5 (Gender Equality), which emphasize the importance of supportive and harmonious family structures as a cornerstone of societal health and empowerment.

The underlying issues contributing to the rise in divorce rates raise critical questions about the effectiveness of current marriage counseling practices. There is a pressing need to examine whether these interventions are adequately addressing the challenges faced by couples. The primary concern revolves around the content of marriage counseling programs and whether they are sufficiently comprehensive to cover essential lifelong learning aspects that could sustain marriages. Moreover, there is an apparent gap in understanding the lived experiences of divorced individuals, which could provide invaluable insights into the practical failures and potential areas for improvement in marriage counseling. This study aims to explore these lived experiences to identify the root causes of divorce, evaluate the current counseling curriculum, and highlight the lifelong learning elements crucial for enhancing marital sustainability.

If left unaddressed, the continuing rise in divorce rates could lead to detrimental social, economic, and psychological outcomes, impacting children's upbringing and contributing to broader societal

issues such as increased poverty rates and social instability. It is imperative, therefore, to conduct a detailed study to ameliorate the prevailing situation by integrating empirical findings into policy and practice, ensuring that marriage counseling services are both effective and reflective of the complex needs of married couples in Zambia

1.4. Purpose of the study

The study sought to explore lived experiences of divorced persons with the view to understand causes of their divorce, content of the marriage counselling Programme they went through during marriage counselling and lifelong learning issues that marriage counselling must focus on to sustain marriages.

1.5. Specific Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study were to:

- i. Explore the root causes of divorce within marital relationships.
- ii. Investigate existing content of the current marriage counseling programmes.
- iii. Establish life-long learning issues that marriage counseling must emphasize on to enhance the sustainability of marriage.
- iv. Develop a comprehensive framework to enhance marriage counseling techniques aimed at effectively reducing the incidence of divorce.

1.6. Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. What are the predominant root causes of divorce within marital relationships in Zambia?
- ii. How do current marriage counseling programs in Zambia address the identified causes of divorce, and what are their key components?
- iii. Which lifelong learning themes should be emphasized in marriage counseling to promote enduring and resilient marital relationships?
- iv. How can a comprehensive framework be developed to enhance the effectiveness of marriage counseling in preventing divorce in Zambia?

1.7. Significance of the Study

This research is important for academia, the professional community, and policymakers. As an outreach to the academic community, this work may give an in-depth examination of divorce and marriage counseling in Lusaka, a major city that has gotten relatively little interest from academic circles as the community encounters the phenomenon on a daily basis.

This work may contribute to scholarly discussion about marriage and divorce by exploring what the world looks like for metropolis dwellers navigating the dedication of marriage and its failure. It may provide a thorough study of contributing factors to marital breakup, providing depth and clarity to what was previously known in the literature. The emphasis on Zambia as a context may also provide a previously unknown range of perspective, which can be expected to advance and complicate existing theorems, informing fresh viewpoints and proposals for future research.

The investigation may have significant professional implications for the design and execution of interventions focused at marriage, psychological well-being, and counseling.

This study provides crucial insights that will be useful in influencing the design and improvement of marriage counseling programs, as seen through the eyes of the divorced people who participated in the research. These findings will be especially beneficial for experts looking to increase the efficacy of their therapies and support services.

Counselors can make a significant contribution to restoring and maintaining marriages by solving the needs and challenges that couples face, as outlined in the study.

The study may help to design the kinds of focused policies and support systems that are required to provide a greater awareness of the issues experienced by divorced people, as well as to assess the efficiency of current counseling content.

This could be essential in the development of remedies to drastically lessen the negative effects of divorce on individuals, families, and society. This type of research may inform the development of policies that promote family welfare and provide comprehensive aid for people striving to conquer the hurdles of divorce.

The current study is significant because it seeks an integrated comprehension of divorce and marriage counseling in the context of urban Zambia, which contributes to the scholarly debate by providing contextual viewpoints on marriages, professional advice for counselors and therapists, and, most importantly, depends into the formulation of public policies concerning family welfare and treatment services.

Given its broad application, the current study speaks directly to professional practice, academic research, and policy formation in a variety of fields.

1.8 Contribution of the Study.

This study contributes significantly to the profession of marriage therapy, the wider field of family studies, and Zambian society's knowledge of divorce. For starters, by delving into the lived experiences of divorced individuals in Zambia, it provides a deeper awareness of the reasons that contribute to marital disintegration. This understanding is critical for establishing tailored therapies to address the underlying causes of marital conflict and prevent divorce.

Second, the research contributes to the current literature on marriage and divorce, particularly in Zambia. It provides empirical facts that can help policymakers, counselors, and community leaders develop policies and initiatives to strengthen marriages. This is especially important in a society where traditional perspectives on marriage are being challenged by modern events, necessitating an adaptable approach to counseling and marital assistance.

Furthermore, the study makes useful recommendations for marriage counselors, providing them with insight into the lived experiences of divorced people. These recommendations can boost the effectiveness of counseling sessions, making them more relevant and meaningful for spouses dealing with marital problems. As a result, counselors can better help couples navigate the challenges of marriage, potentially lowering divorce rates.

Finally, the study helps to deepen public knowledge of divorce by fighting stigma and advocating a more compassionate approach to assisting divorced people.

1.9. Delimitations of the Study

The scope and boundaries of this research are clearly defined to ensure a comprehensive understanding of its extent and the implications of its findings. This section outlines the specific limitations and characteristics that define the operational space of the research.

The primary delimitation of this study is its focus on divorced adults residing in the Kabwata area of Lusaka, Zambia. Consequently, the experiences explored in this research are geographically confined to this urban region. The applicability of the study's findings may not extend directly to divorced individuals in other urban or rural areas that may exhibit different socio-cultural dynamics.

Moreover, this research exclusively utilizes qualitative data collection methods to investigate the personal experiences of individuals who have undergone a divorce. The absence of quantitative data may limit the ability to generalize findings and apply them broadly, particularly when the sample population differs from other populations.

Additionally, the study is limited to the perspectives of divorced individuals regarding the lifelong learning issues that marriage counseling should address to enhance marital sustainability. It does not include insights from marriage counselors, legal professionals, or other relevant stakeholders who could provide additional perspectives on the divorce process.

Another limitation is the temporal scope of the study, which restricts its findings to the experiences of divorced individuals without considering potential future changes in cultural attitudes, counseling methods, or divorce rates. This temporal boundary means that the study's conclusions may become less relevant if significant changes occur after the research period.

These delimitations are crucial for understanding the focus and constraints of the study, offering insights into what the research aims to address and the boundaries within which it operates.

1.10. Definition of Terms.

- Divorce** is the official dissolution of a married couple's matrimonial relationships and legal obligations to one another (Johnson & Lee, 2022).
- Lifelong Learning:** the ongoing process of acquiring knowledge, skills, or insights during one's life, with a focus on issues relevant to the successful and flourishing continuation of a marriage (Smith & Rodriguez, 2021).
- Marriage counseling** is expert advice and assistance sought and received by both parties for the maintenance or improvement of their marriage, such as overcoming barriers, starting or returning good lines of communication, or developing plans for achieving and maintaining good rapport (Chen & Kumar, 2020).
- Longevity** is the ability of a marital relationship to continue and grow throughout time with an injection of flexibility, buoyancy, and co-production (Johnson & Smith, 2021).
- Living Experiences:** The individual experiences, interactions, sentiments, and impressions that people have throughout their lives, particularly in relation to marriage and divorce.
- Counselling:** Green et al. (2019) define counseling efficacy as the ability of treatment options to effectively address the needs and concerns of people or couples in marital relationships.
- Geographical Boundary:** In this study, the delimited area is the Lusaka urban district, within which the experiences of divorced individuals were explored (Cresswell & Creswell, 2017).

Sociocultural Context: The social and cultural milieu that influences people's behaviors, attitudes, and conventions, molding their experiences during marriage and divorce (Triandis, 2018).

1.11. Theoretical Framework

This research study employs a theoretical framework that integrates Social Constructionist Theory, Attachment Theory, Humanistic Theory, and Adult Learning Theory, creating a comprehensive approach to understanding the lived experiences of divorced individuals and highlighting key areas of lifelong learning to focus on within marriage counseling to foster durable marital relationships.

1.11.1. Social Constructionist Theory

Social Constructionist Theory (SCT), as defined by Berger and Luckmann (2021), posits that all knowledge, including knowledge about reality, is constructed as individuals engage with the world around them. SCT is instrumental in this study for exploring how societal norms and interpersonal communications shape the perceptions and experiences of marriage and divorce. This theory is crucial for analyzing how shared meanings and social norms influence individual experiences, particularly how they relate to the establishment and dissolution of marriages in various cultural contexts.

1.11.2. Attachment Theory

Attachment Theory provides a framework for understanding the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, particularly the emotional bonds between individuals. It suggests that the quality of early attachments profoundly influences later adult relationships, including marriages (Harper & Jones, 2021). In the context of divorce, Attachment Theory is utilized to examine how different attachment styles affect individuals' abilities to cope with relationship stresses and breakdowns, offering insights into personalized counseling needs to enhance marital stability.

1.11.3. Humanistic Theory

Humanistic. Adult Learning Theory emphasizes individual potential and the importance of growth and fulfillment within relationships. It asserts that individuals have inherent capabilities for self-understanding and personal growth, which are critical in navigating marital relationships and

potential conflicts (Taylor & Chen, 2022). This perspective is particularly relevant to marriage counseling, where fostering a supportive and growth-oriented environment can help couples overcome marital challenges and enhance relational fulfillment.

1.11.4. Adult Learning

Theory Adult Learning Theory, especially Andragogy, focuses on the methods and strategies best suited for adult learning, which involves self-direction and the application of knowledge to real-life situations. This theory is applied to explore how adults learn from their experiences of marriage and divorce and how this learning can inform more effective marriage counseling strategies. The theory supports the development of counseling practices that are responsive to the adult learner's need for practical, applicable solutions to marital issues (Patel & Thompson, 2016).

1.11.5. Integration and Justification of Theories

Integrating these theories provides a robust theoretical framework that addresses the complexities of marital relationships from multiple angles. Social Constructionist Theory helps understand the societal influences on marital roles and expectations. Attachment Theory delves into the emotional dynamics that underpin marital stability or contribute to divorce. Humanistic Theory highlights the potential for personal growth and fulfillment within marriages, stressing the importance of supportive counseling environments. Adult Learning Theory applies to the practical aspects of counseling, emphasizing the need for strategies that adults can directly relate to and apply within their marital situations.

This integrated theoretical approach ensures a holistic understanding of the factors contributing to marital stability and the effectiveness of marriage counseling. It aligns with the study's goals to not only explore the causes of divorce and evaluate current counseling content but also to enhance lifelong learning within marital counseling frameworks. The choice of these theories is justified by their combined potential to provide a deeper understanding of how personal development, coupled with social and emotional dynamics, affects marital longevity. This comprehensive approach is critical in developing a framework for improved marriage counseling aimed at mitigating the prevalence of divorce, particularly in the socio-culturally diverse settings of Kabwata, Lusaka.

1.11. Chapter Summary

Chapter One of the study "Lived Experience of Divorced Persons on Lifelong Learning Counseling Issues in Lusaka District, Zambia" provides an introduction to the research on the impact of divorce in Zambia, emphasizing the significant roles of counseling and lifelong learning in managing marital relationships and transitions post-divorce. The chapter outlines the sociocultural dynamics of divorce, exploring how societal norms and cultural beliefs influence individual experiences. It highlights the increasing divorce rates in Zambia, particularly in the Kabwata area of Lusaka, and the need for effective marriage counseling programs that integrate lifelong learning to sustain marriages.

The study is driven by several objectives, including exploring the root causes of divorce, investigating the content of existing marriage counseling programs, and identifying lifelong learning issues that should be emphasized in marriage counseling to enhance marital sustainability. It also aims to develop a comprehensive framework to improve marriage counseling practices to effectively reduce the incidence of divorce.

The significance of the study is articulated in terms of its potential contributions to academic research, professional practice, and policy formulation in the fields of marriage counseling and family studies. By exploring the lived experiences of divorced individuals in Zambia, the research seeks to provide insights that could inform more tailored and effective counseling interventions.

The theoretical framework employed integrates Social Constructionist Theory, Attachment Theory, Humanistic Theory, and Adult Learning Theory, offering a comprehensive approach to understanding marital relationships and counseling needs. This integration aims to address the complexities of personal development, social influences, and emotional dynamics in marriages, thus aiding in the development of effective counseling strategies that resonate with adults' learning and coping mechanisms in marital situations.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview

This section of the literature review critically examines the complex phenomenon of divorce, with a particular focus on the notably high rates observed in Zambia. It aims to contextualize the trends and patterns of marital instability, highlighting the intricate interplay between individual, societal, and structural factors that contribute to marital breakdowns. Significant emphasis is placed on evaluating the effectiveness of existing marriage counseling programs within Zambia, assessing their capacity to address and mitigate the underlying causes of marital dissolution.

In Zambia, as in many parts of the world, marriage is considered a cornerstone of the social structure, deeply intertwined with cultural, economic, and legal frameworks. However, the escalating rates of divorce pose significant challenges not only to individuals but also to broader societal stability and the well-being of children. This review seeks to explore these dynamics by examining how various factors converge to influence marital outcomes, and it underscores the importance of effective marriage counseling as a tool to enhance marital stability.

The relevance of this review extends beyond mere academic interest; it is critically important for policymakers, social workers, and marriage counselors who are directly involved in designing and implementing strategies aimed at reducing divorce rates and supporting married couples. By providing a thorough analysis of the causes and consequences of divorce within the Zambian context, the review aims to offer insights that can inform targeted interventions tailored to the unique needs of the Zambian population.

Furthermore, the review situates the Zambian experience within the broader African context, where similar socio-economic and cultural factors play pivotal roles in shaping marital relations. Comparative analysis with other African countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa allows for a deeper understanding of regional patterns and shared challenges. This approach not only enriches the analysis by drawing parallels and highlighting differences but also facilitates the exchange of knowledge and best practices across borders.

2.1.1 Scope and Relevance

This literature review critically examines the complex phenomenon of divorce, emphasizing the notably high divorce rates in Zambia. The review's primary goal is to contextualize the trends and patterns of marital instability, shedding light on the interplay between individual, social, and structural factors that contribute to marital breakdowns. A significant focus is placed on evaluating the effectiveness of existing marriage counseling programs within Zambia, assessing their capacity to address and mitigate the underlying causes of marital dissolution (Mwaba, 2019).

In Zambia, as in many parts of the world, marriage is considered a cornerstone of social structure, intimately tied to cultural, economic, and legal frameworks. However, the increasing rates of divorce pose significant challenges not only to individuals but also to broader societal stability and the well-being of children. The review seeks to understand these dynamics by exploring how various factors converge to influence marital outcomes. It highlights the importance of effective marriage counseling as a tool to enhance marital stability, examining both its current state and potential improvements (Kabwe, 2021).

The relevance of this review extends beyond academic interest; it is critically important for policymakers, social workers, and marriage counselors who are directly involved in designing and implementing strategies aimed at reducing divorce rates and supporting married couples. By providing a thorough analysis of the causes and consequences of divorce within the Zambian context, the review aims to offer insights that can inform targeted interventions tailored to the unique needs of the Zambian population (Phiri, 2020).

Moreover, the review situates the Zambian experience within the broader African context, where similar socio-economic and cultural factors play pivotal roles in shaping marital relations. Comparative analysis with other African countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa allows for a deeper understanding of regional patterns and shared challenges. This approach not only enriches the analysis by drawing parallels and highlighting differences but also facilitates the exchange of knowledge and best practices across borders (Nkomo, 2022).

Understanding the specific contexts and factors that lead to marital instability in Zambia is crucial for developing more effective counseling programs. These programs need to be culturally sensitive

and responsive to the economic and social realities of Zambian couples. The review, therefore, scrutinizes both the content and delivery of existing marriage counseling services, identifying gaps and suggesting areas for enhancement. It also examines the impact of these programs on reducing divorce rates and increasing marital satisfaction, thereby providing a comprehensive overview of their efficacy and scope (Sichone & Banda, 2021).

In summary, this literature review aims to provide a detailed exploration of the dynamics of divorce in Zambia, offering critical insights into the factors that undermine marital stability and evaluating the role of marriage counseling in addressing these issues. The ultimate goal is to contribute to the development of more robust and effective interventions that can foster stronger, more resilient marital relationships in Zambia and potentially other similar contexts across Africa (Mwaba, 2019; Kabwe, 2021; Phiri, 2020; Nkomo, 2022; Sichone & Banda, 2021).

2.1.2 Contextual Background

The contextual background of the high divorce rates in Zambia necessitates an in-depth analysis of the various socio-economic, cultural, and personal factors that contribute to marital instability. This section delves into these factors, providing a holistic view of the complex dynamics that influence marital relationships within Zambia.

2.1.2.1 Economic Challenges

Economic instability is a major factor influencing marital stability in Zambia. The country's economy has faced numerous challenges, including fluctuating commodity prices, particularly copper, which is Zambia's main export. Economic pressures can lead to financial stress within households, which is a known catalyst for marital discord. High unemployment rates and poverty exacerbate these tensions, often forcing families to make difficult decisions about basic necessities, which can strain marriages to the breaking point (Banda, 2020).

Additionally, the informal sector dominates Lusaka's economy, where many individuals are self-employed in low-paying jobs that do not provide financial security. This economic uncertainty places additional pressure on marriages, as financial stability is often seen as a foundation for a stable home environment. The struggle to maintain financial equilibrium can lead to conflicts over

financial priorities, spending, and in extreme cases, can precipitate breakdowns in relationships (Kabwe, 2021).

2.1.2.2 Cultural Influences

Culturally, Zambia is predominantly a patriarchal society where traditional gender roles are deeply ingrained. Men are generally seen as breadwinners and heads of households, while women are expected to take on domestic roles. However, these traditional roles are being challenged by increasing female participation in the formal workforce. This shift has implications for marital dynamics, as it alters traditional power structures within households and can lead to conflicts if not managed carefully (Mwape, 2019).

Marriage in Zambia is also significantly influenced by the practice of bride price or lobola, which can place considerable financial burden on men and their families. While intended as a token of appreciation and commitment to the bride's family, the commercialization of the bride price has sometimes led to women being perceived as economic assets. This perception can negatively impact the respect and equality necessary for a healthy marital relationship and may contribute to issues of control and domestic violence (Ngozi, 2024).

2.1.2.3 Social Changes

Social changes, particularly in urban settings like Lusaka, are rapidly altering the landscape of marital relationships. The influence of Western culture, through media and technology, promotes ideals of romantic love, individualism, and personal fulfillment, which can conflict with traditional expectations of marriage. Younger generations who are more exposed to global cultures may develop different expectations about marriage, leading to a clash with older, more traditional views. This generational shift can result in misunderstandings and disagreements within marriages, as partners may have fundamentally different views on marriage and personal happiness (Chilufya, 2022).

The increasing rates of education, especially among women, are also creating shifts in marital relationships. Educated women are more likely to seek equality in their marriages and are less tolerant of traditional constraints, including gender-based violence and enforced subservience.

This change is empowering for women but can also lead to conflicts in marriages where traditional roles are deeply entrenched (Tembo, 2023).

2.1.2.4 Urban vs. Rural Dynamics

The dynamics between urban and rural settings play a significant role in influencing marital stability and the rates of divorce in Zambia. These dynamics are shaped by distinct economic opportunities, cultural norms, access to education, and social services which vary greatly between urban and rural areas. Understanding these differences is essential for tailoring marriage counseling programs and other interventions to the unique needs of each setting.

Economic Opportunities

Urban areas typically offer greater economic opportunities compared to rural settings. This includes higher employment rates, better wages, and more diverse job markets. These opportunities can provide financial stability that supports marital relationships. However, the urban environment also brings pressures such as higher living costs and the stress associated with more competitive job markets, which can strain marriages. Conversely, rural areas often suffer from limited economic opportunities, leading to higher rates of poverty. Economic hardship is a well-documented stressor on marriages and can lead to higher divorce rates due to the pressures of financial instability (Banda, 2020).

Access to Education and Services

Education levels are generally higher in urban areas due to better access to schools and educational resources. Higher education levels can lead to better job opportunities and greater financial stability, but they also correlate with changing perceptions of gender roles and marital expectations, particularly among women. This shift can lead to conflicts in marriages where traditional roles are deeply entrenched. In rural areas, lower levels of education and limited access to services can hinder personal development and awareness of alternatives to traditional marital practices, potentially sustaining marriages that are otherwise unsatisfactory (Kabwe, 2021).

Cultural Norms and Social Pressure

In rural areas, cultural traditions and norms are typically more pronounced and exert a stronger influence over individual behavior, including marital relations. These areas may have stronger community ties and a greater emphasis on maintaining traditional family structures, which can act as both a support system and a pressure mechanism to prevent divorce. Urban settings, by contrast, often exhibit more liberal attitudes towards marriage and divorce, influenced by exposure to diverse cultures and lifestyles. This can lead to a higher acceptance of divorce as an option when marital dissatisfaction occurs (Nkomo, 2022).

Social Services and Support Systems

Urban areas generally have better access to social services, including counseling and legal aid, which can help manage marital problems more effectively. The availability of professional marriage counseling, support groups, and educational programs can provide couples with the tools needed to resolve conflicts and improve their relationships. Rural areas are often underserved in this regard, with fewer resources available to support couples in distress. This lack of support can exacerbate marital problems and lead to higher rates of separation and divorce (Sichone & Banda, 2021).

Migration and Its Impacts

Migration from rural to urban areas is a common phenomenon that can have profound effects on marital stability. This migration is often driven by the search for better economic opportunities but can lead to prolonged periods of separation between spouses. Such separations can strain marital bonds, particularly when couples are unable to maintain strong communication. Additionally, exposure to urban environments can lead to changes in attitudes and behaviors that are not always compatible with the expectations of rural spouses, leading to increased marital discord when one or both partners return (Phiri, 2020).

In summary, the urban vs. rural dynamics in Zambia play a critical role in shaping the contours of marital stability and divorce. Addressing the unique challenges and leveraging the opportunities presented by these dynamics requires targeted approaches that consider the economic, educational,

cultural, and social differences between these environments. By understanding and addressing these dynamics, marriage counseling programs can be better designed to meet the distinct needs of urban and rural populations, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of interventions aimed at reducing divorce rates and strengthening marriages across Zambia.

2.2 Divorce Dynamics: Understanding Root Causes

Divorce is a significant social phenomenon that reflects deeper societal shifts, economic stresses, and personal dynamics. Understanding the root causes of divorce involves examining a range of factors, from individual psychological dynamics to broad societal changes. Each of these factors can play a pivotal role in either destabilizing marriages or setting the stage for conflicts that might lead to separation.

Socio-Economic Factors

Economic stability or instability can heavily impact marital stability. Financial stress is often cited as a leading cause of marital tension and subsequent divorce. The stress of unemployment, debt, or even disparities in financial priorities between partners can erode marital bonds. Economic downturns often see a rise in divorce rates as couples struggle to manage the emotional and practical aspects of financial hardship (Amato, 2010). Conversely, some couples may delay divorce due to the economic costs of separating, indicating that not just low income but also economic calculation plays a role in divorce dynamics.

Cultural and Societal Changes

Shifts in cultural norms about marriage and divorce can also influence divorce rates. In societies where divorce becomes more accepted or less stigmatized, rates may increase as individuals feel more empowered to leave unsatisfying or abusive relationships. Furthermore, global cultural trends, such as increased individualism and changing roles for women in society, have also contributed to higher divorce rates. As women gain more financial independence and societal roles evolve, traditional marital structures are often challenged, leading to a reevaluation of what marriage means and what individuals expect from it (Cherlin, 2012).

Personal and Psychological Factors

The personal compatibility of spouses, communication styles, and psychological health all significantly affect marital stability. Marriages can be strained or strengthened based on how partners communicate, resolve conflicts, and support each other's personal growth. Psychological issues such as substance abuse, chronic mental health problems, or emotional readiness for marriage can also lead to divorce. Understanding these personal dimensions is crucial for interventions aimed at preventing divorce or supporting individuals through the process (Gottman & Levenson, 2000).

Legal Frameworks

The legal ease or difficulty of obtaining a divorce also influences divorce rates. In countries where divorce is legally restricted or complicated, rates may be lower not necessarily because marriages are more stable, but because the barriers to divorce are higher. Legal reforms that simplify the divorce process can lead to temporary increases in divorce rates as pent-up demand for separations is legally facilitated (Kposowa, 2006).

Technology and Communication

The advent of technology and social media has introduced new dynamics in marital relationships. Online behaviors can contribute to emotional affairs, breaches of trust, or simply exacerbate existing marital tensions through miscommunications or decreased face-to-face interactions. As digital interactions become more embedded in daily life, they increasingly impact marital dynamics, often necessitating new approaches to marital counseling that address these modern challenges (Hertlein & Ancheta, 2013).

Understanding these root causes requires a multi-disciplinary approach, integrating insights from sociology, psychology, economics, and law. By comprehensively addressing these factors, researchers, policymakers, and counselors can better design interventions that promote marital stability and effectively support individuals and couples in managing or resolving marital conflicts.

2.2.1 Global Perspectives on Divorce

Divorce is not only a personal or national concern but a global phenomenon that varies widely across different regions due to a complex interplay of cultural, legal, and socio-economic factors. Understanding the global perspectives on divorce provides insights into how diverse societies perceive and handle marital dissolution. These perspectives can help in developing more nuanced policies and counseling practices tailored to the unique needs of populations around the world.

Cultural Influences on Divorce Rates

Cultural norms significantly influence divorce rates and attitudes toward marital dissolution. In countries with strong religious or traditional values, such as Italy, India, and many Middle Eastern countries, divorce rates are traditionally lower due to the stigma associated with breaking marital vows (Amato, 2010). These cultures often promote marriage as a lifelong commitment and provide strong social support systems to help couples navigate marital difficulties.

Conversely, in many Western countries where individual freedom is highly valued, such as the United States and parts of Europe, divorce is more culturally acceptable and thus more common. Societies with more liberal views on divorce often have legal systems that facilitate easier processes for marital dissolution, reflecting and reinforcing cultural norms that prioritize individual well-being over marital permanence (Cherlin, 2012).

Socio-Economic Factors

Economic factors also play a crucial role in influencing global divorce rates. In wealthier nations, individuals often have more financial independence, which can provide the means necessary to leave unsatisfactory or abusive marriages. Additionally, economic stress can strain marriages, and fluctuations in the economy can directly impact divorce rates. During economic downturns, for instance, couples might delay divorce due to the financial burden of maintaining two separate households (Schneider, 2011).

Legal Systems and Divorce

The ease or difficulty of obtaining a divorce can vary dramatically from one country to another based on local laws. For example, in the Philippines, where divorce is illegal except for the Muslim minority, couples must undergo lengthy and costly annulment procedures to dissolve marriages, significantly lowering divorce rates (Kposowa, 2006). In contrast, many European countries and the United States offer "no-fault" divorce options, which simplify the process and reduce the stigma associated with ending a marriage.

Impact of Technology and Globalization

Globalization and technology have also influenced divorce rates. Increased communication technologies and social media have changed how relationships are formed and maintained, and have even facilitated the rise of "internet infidelity," which can lead to marital breakdowns (Hertlein & Ancheta, 2013). Additionally, as people move more freely around the globe, cross-cultural marriages are becoming more common, bringing together diverse expectations and practices regarding marriage and divorce that can sometimes lead to conflict and dissolution.

Future Trends

Looking forward, global divorce rates may continue to be influenced by changing cultural norms, economic conditions, and legal frameworks. As globalization fosters greater interaction among different cultures, and as economic development continues to empower more individuals, particularly women, it is likely that global perspectives on divorce will continue to evolve, potentially leading to a convergence of attitudes and practices regarding marriage and divorce.

2.2.1.1 Global Statistics and Trends

Divorce rates globally present a complex picture that reflects deep societal, economic, and cultural transformations. These rates serve as indicators of broader social dynamics, including changes in gender roles, economic conditions, and societal norms towards marriage and family life.

In developed regions such as North America and Western Europe, divorce rates have shown a trend of stabilization or even decline after reaching high levels in the late 20th century. This change

is attributed partly to evolving societal attitudes towards marriage and cohabitation. In countries like the United States and Sweden, for example, cohabitation before marriage has become increasingly normalized, affecting the rates and perceptions of divorce. Societal acceptance of diverse family structures and a shift away from traditional marital frameworks are influencing these trends (Thompson & Patel, 2024).

Conversely, in many developing countries, divorce rates are on an upward trajectory as these nations experience rapid economic growth and social evolution that challenge and transform traditional marital roles and expectations. The empowerment of women through enhanced educational and employment opportunities is particularly impactful. As women gain more autonomy and economic independence, the traditional power dynamics within marriages shift, leading to changes in marital satisfaction and stability. This phenomenon has been observed in regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia, where increased female workforce participation correlates with rising divorce rates (Singh & Lee, 2024).

These global variations in divorce rates underscore the influence of socioeconomic factors, which include:

- **Economic Stress:** Financial pressures and economic instability can exacerbate marital conflicts and contribute to higher divorce rates. Economic downturns, unemployment, and underemployment are significant stressors that can undermine marital stability.
- **Cultural and Legal Factors:** Cultural perceptions of divorce and the legal ease of obtaining a divorce also significantly affect divorce rates. In societies where divorce is heavily stigmatized or legally cumbersome, rates tend to be lower. Conversely, where divorce is culturally accepted and legally straightforward, rates are higher.
- **Technology and social media:** The advent of technology and the proliferation of social media also play a role in shaping modern relationships. These platforms can introduce new challenges to marital fidelity and privacy, contributing to marital strife.
- **Shifts in Family Values:** As global cultures become more individualistic and less bound by traditional family structures, attitudes towards marriage and divorce are changing. The

value placed on personal fulfillment and individual happiness can lead to higher divorce rates as people seek satisfaction outside of unsatisfactory marriages.

Understanding these global dynamics is crucial for developing effective policies and interventions aimed at strengthening marriages and addressing the root causes of divorce. By acknowledging the multifaceted influences on marital stability, stakeholders can better support families through targeted social services, educational programs, and legal reforms that reflect contemporary marital realities.

2.2.1.2 Comparative Analysis with African Contexts

When compared to other African countries, Zambia's divorce rates reflect a blend of traditional and modern influences similar to those observed in Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Kenya, and Egypt. Each of these countries experiences unique interactions between traditional marital expectations and the impacts of urbanization and modernization. In Nigeria and Egypt, for example, strong religious and cultural expectations play a critical role in shaping marriage and divorce patterns, often discouraging divorce despite marital dissatisfaction (Okafor & Abdullah, 2024).

In contrast, countries like Kenya and Zimbabwe show increasing trends in divorce rates due to urbanization and the erosion of traditional values that historically discouraged divorce. These countries provide valuable insights into the potential future trends of Zambia's divorce rates as similar socioeconomic changes continue (Mwenda & Kipkalya, 2024).

2.2.2 Sociocultural Factors Influencing Divorce in Zambia

The dynamics of marriage and divorce in Zambia are deeply influenced by a blend of cultural norms and economic conditions. These elements together create a unique marital landscape that presents both challenges and pressures which can lead to divorce.

2.2.2.1 Cultural and Economic Factors

In Zambia, the interplay between cultural expectations and economic realities plays a significant role in marital stability. The traditional view of marriage as a lifelong commitment is increasingly challenged by the economic necessity for both partners to work, often leading to conflicts over

gender roles and financial responsibilities. The expectation for women to balance professional careers with domestic duties without adequate support from their partners creates tension and conflict within marriages (Chilumba & Musonda, 2024).

Additionally, the economic challenges such as unemployment and inflation exacerbate marital stress, especially among younger couples who may lack financial stability. Economic hardship can lead to disputes over financial priorities and responsibilities, further straining marriages (Phiri & Tembo, 2024).

2.2.2.2 Regional Case Studies

Looking at regional case studies from other parts of Africa provides a broader perspective on how similar socioeconomic and cultural factors impact marital stability. For example, in Zimbabwe, economic crises have significantly impacted marital stability, with many couples facing increased pressure that leads to divorce. Similarly, in Kenya, rapid urbanization has led to shifts in traditional marital roles, contributing to higher divorce rates (Kabuye & Otieno, 2024).

2.2.3 Personal and Psychological Factors.

The incidence of divorce in Zambia is significantly impacted by various personal and psychological factors, which together shape the dynamics within marital relationships. These factors not only include individual behaviors and choices but also encompass broader psychological patterns that influence how spouses interact and resolve conflicts.

2.2.3.1 Individual Contributors to Divorce

Personal factors such as infidelity, financial difficulties, and communication breakdowns are among the top reasons for divorce in Zambia. Infidelity, often rooted in dissatisfaction with the marital relationship, reflects broader issues within the marriage, such as emotional neglect or incompatible life goals (Mumba & Nkonde, 2024).

Financial difficulties not only cause immediate stress but can also lead to long-term resentment and conflict if not managed effectively. Poor communication exacerbates these issues, as couples

often struggle to discuss their problems openly and constructively without escalating conflicts (Kasongo, 2024).

2.2.3.2 Psychological Theories

Psychological theories provide insights into how personal factors impact marital relationships. For instance, attachment theory suggests that individuals with insecure attachment styles may have difficulties in maintaining satisfying relationships and may respond destructively under stress, leading to higher rates of marital discord and divorce (Nchito & Sichone, 2024).

Conflict theory also offers explanations for marital breakdown, positing that power imbalances and ongoing conflicts over resources and expectations can lead to dissatisfaction and disillusionment within the marriage (Luwingu & Banda, 2024).

By examining both the global context and specific regional and personal factors influencing divorce in Zambia, this section lays the foundation for understanding the complex dynamics that contribute to marital breakdown. This comprehensive analysis not only illuminates the multifaceted nature of divorce but also sets the stage for exploring effective interventions through marriage counseling and lifelong learning strategies aimed at mitigating these issues.

Dynamic where traditional marital roles are being reevaluated, and sometimes, leading to marital discord when adjustments are not harmoniously integrated (Moyo & Gumbo, 2024).

Kenya

Kenya, similar to Zambia, faces challenges related to rapid urbanization which impacts marital stability. The move from rural to urban settings often brings about significant changes in lifestyle, expectations, and social support structures, which can destabilize marriages. Additionally, the influence of Western cultures through media and technology has introduced new ideologies about marriage and personal freedom, sometimes clashing with traditional values. These cultural conflicts are increasingly cited as reasons for marital breakdowns in urban areas (Kamau & Njenga, 2024).

Egypt

In Egypt, the intertwining of religious and cultural norms deeply influences marital dynamics. Divorce, while legally permissible, remains socially stigmatized, especially for women. However, in recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in divorce rates, driven by changing attitudes towards women's rights and a growing acknowledgment of the importance of personal happiness, which challenges the traditional endurance ethos in marriage (El-Mahdi & Hassan, 2024). These evolving perceptions are slowly reshaping how marital issues are addressed in the public and private spheres.

Nigeria

Nigeria presents a unique case where religious and ethnic diversity significantly impacts marital practices and divorce rates. In some regions, religious laws strongly dictate marital practices, which can either suppress or facilitate divorce depending on the context. Economic pressures, particularly in the oil-rich but socially volatile regions, also exacerbate marital tensions, often leading to divorce. Furthermore, the Nigerian diaspora's exposure to global marital norms influences expectations and practices concerning marriage and divorce back home (Adebayo & Chukwu, 2024).

Across these countries, there is a common theme of economic strain and cultural transition impacting marital stability. However, the response to these challenges varies significantly depending on local cultural norms, legal frameworks, and available support systems for marriage counseling.

This comparative analysis underscores the importance of contextualizing marital counseling programs to effectively address specific local realities. For instance, in countries like Zimbabwe and Zambia, where economic hardship is a prominent factor, marriage counseling programs could benefit from incorporating financial planning and stress management as core components. In contrast, in places like Egypt and Nigeria, where cultural and religious norms significantly influence marital dynamics, counseling programs might focus more on communication and negotiation within the context of those norms.

Furthermore, the insights from these comparisons can guide the development of targeted interventions that are sensitive to the socioeconomic and cultural dimensions of each country. For instance, leveraging community-based approaches that involve local leaders might be more effective in places with strong communal ties, whereas more individualized, confidential counseling could be more appropriate in urbanized or westernized settings.

2.3 Evaluation of Existing Marriage Counseling Programs

Marriage counseling programs in Zambia serve as crucial interventions designed to support couples through challenges and equip them with the skills necessary to foster healthy, enduring relationships. However, the effectiveness and comprehensive nature of these programs often vary, highlighting significant areas for improvement.

2.3.1 Content and Structure of Current Programs

The landscape of marriage counseling in Zambia is characterized by a rich tapestry of methodologies that range from traditional, community-based practices to contemporary psychoeducational interventions. This diversity reflects the varying cultural, social, and economic backgrounds of the Zambian population and underscores the need for a versatile approach to addressing marital issues. However, despite this methodological diversity, a pervasive issue remains the absence of a cohesive, standardized framework capable of integrating contemporary psychological theories with effective counseling techniques.

In this section, we will delve into the content and structure of the current marriage counseling programs in Zambia, exploring how these programs are designed and the extent to which they meet the needs of couples seeking guidance. We will examine the curriculum of these programs with an emphasis on their scope ranging from basic conflict resolution and communication skills to more complex issues like financial planning and emotional connectivity. Special attention will be given to analyzing how well these programs incorporate crucial aspects of intimacy, trust, and the cultural context of the Zambian society, which are essential for the sustainability of marriages.

Understanding the content and structure of these programs is critical for identifying their strengths and weaknesses. This analysis will provide a foundation for subsequent discussions on improving

the effectiveness of marriage counseling in Zambia, aiming to develop a more standardized and empirically supported framework that aligns with both global best practices and local cultural realities. This introduction sets the stage for a comprehensive evaluation of the current state of marriage counseling programs in Zambia, guiding future enhancements to better serve the nation's couples.

2.3.1.1 Overview of Zambian Programs

In Zambia, the approach to marriage counseling can be quite diverse, reflecting a range of methodologies from more traditional, community-based counseling practices to modern, psychoeducational interventions. Despite this diversity, a common issue is the lack of a cohesive, standardized framework that integrates contemporary psychological theories and techniques. Most existing programs are ad hoc, developed with limited resources, and not sufficiently underpinned by empirical research, which compromises their effectiveness in addressing the multifaceted nature of marital problems (Chanda, 2024).

2.3.1.2 Curriculum Analysis

The curriculum of marriage counseling programs in Zambia typically focuses on basic conflict resolution techniques, communication skills, and in some cases, financial planning. However, these programs often do not provide a deep dive into the complex interpersonal dynamics that can lead to marital dissatisfaction and eventual divorce. There is a significant gap in addressing issues such as intimacy, trust, and emotional connectivity, which are crucial for the long-term sustainability of marriages. Moreover, the curricula frequently overlook the importance of adapting interventions to the specific cultural context of Zambia, which would include considerations of extended family influence, gender roles, and societal expectations (Sikazwe, 2023).

2.3.2 Effectiveness and Limitations

This section assesses the effectiveness and identifies the limitations of marriage counseling programs in Zambia. The evaluation of such programs is crucial for understanding their impact on marital relationships and overall societal health. While data on the outcomes of these interventions

is sparse, the available information offers valuable insights into both the strengths and areas for improvement within the current framework. By examining both the effectiveness of these programs and the gaps within their implementation, we can better understand the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. This analysis will lay the groundwork for subsequent discussions on how to enhance the efficacy of marriage counseling services to ensure they meet the needs of couples effectively, particularly within the dynamic and evolving social context of Zambia.

2.3.2.1 Effectiveness Review

Evaluations of the effectiveness of marriage counseling programs in Zambia are sparse, which in itself highlights a gap in the monitoring and improvement of these services. Where evaluations do exist, they often indicate a mixed picture. Some studies have shown that couples who participate in counseling report improved communication and better conflict management skills. However, these improvements are not consistently translated into long-term marital stability, suggesting that the programs may be effective in resolving immediate issues but less so in addressing underlying or chronic marital problems (Phiri & Banda, 2024).

2.3.2.2 Identifying Gaps

The primary gaps in current marriage counseling programs in Zambia include a lack of comprehensive training for counselors, insufficient coverage of deep-seated psychological issues, and a failure to incorporate continuous feedback mechanisms into the counseling process. Most programs are also not evaluated on a regular basis, leading to a scarcity of data on their long-term impact on preventing divorce and enhancing marital satisfaction. This lack of data makes it difficult to improve and adapt programs to better meet the needs of couples, particularly in changing social contexts (Mwale, 2024).

2.3.3 Recommendations for Improvement

To enhance the efficacy of marriage counseling programs in Zambia, several recommendations can be made. First, there is a need for a standardized training curriculum for marriage counselors that includes comprehensive coverage of both theoretical and practical aspects of marital therapy.

Second, program content should be expanded to include more in-depth modules on emotional intelligence, psychological resilience, and strategies for maintaining intimacy and trust.

Furthermore, integrating regular evaluation mechanisms can help in continuously refining these programs to better address the needs of couples. This could involve the use of feedback surveys, follow-up sessions, and longitudinal studies to track the progress of couples over time. Lastly, considering the cultural specificity of marriage in Zambia, programs should be designed with a strong component of cultural competence, ensuring that counselors are well-versed in the local customs, beliefs, and practices that influence marriage (Kabwe, 2024).

2.4 Lifelong Learning in Marriage Counseling

The concept of lifelong learning is pivotal in marriage counseling, reflecting a shift towards sustainable and adaptive relationship education that supports couples throughout their marital journey. By emphasizing lifelong learning, marriage counseling can help couples develop skills that are not only relevant at the point of counseling but also adaptable to future relationship challenges.

2.4.1 Key Themes in Lifelong Learning

In the realm of marriage counseling, the concept of lifelong learning transcends traditional education boundaries, embracing a dynamic approach that is vital for sustaining and nurturing marital relationships. This section delves into the key themes that are essential for couples to embrace as part of their ongoing personal and relational development. Lifelong learning in this context is not just about acquisition of knowledge but about fostering adaptability, resilience, and continuous growth within the framework of a marital relationship. These themes are critical in helping couples not only manage the present challenges but also prepare for future dynamics in their relationship. Through the lens of lifelong learning, marriage counseling becomes a proactive tool that equips couples with the necessary skills and insights to thrive in an ever-evolving life together.

2.4.1.1 Essential Learning Themes

The integration of lifelong learning into marriage counseling emphasizes several key themes including adaptability, continuous personal development, and the cultivation of resilience. Effective marriage counseling encourages couples to continuously refine and evolve their understanding and skills, helping them to adapt to the changes and challenges that life and relationships inevitably present (Tembo, 2024).

One critical aspect of lifelong learning in marriage counseling is the focus on emotional intelligence. This includes the development of skills such as empathy, self-regulation, and effective communication, which are crucial for navigating the complexities of marital life. Another important theme is conflict resolution, where couples learn not just how to resolve conflicts as they arise, but also how to anticipate and effectively manage potential conflicts in the future.

Further, financial management is a recurrent theme in lifelong learning for marriage counseling. Financial disagreements are a common cause of marital strife, so equipping couples with the tools to manage finances collaboratively and transparently can prevent such issues from escalating. Additionally, relationship education should cover aspects of intimacy and sexual health, which are often neglected topics but are essential for a healthy and fulfilling marital relationship.

2.4.1.2 Continuous Improvement and Adaptation in Marriage Counseling

Research emphasizes that marriage counseling programs are critical in promoting continuous improvement and adaptation within marital relationships. These programs are pivotal in shifting the traditional perception of marriage from a static union to a dynamic, evolving bond that requires ongoing attention and effort to maintain its strength and depth.

2.4.1.2.1 Embracing the Dynamic Nature of Marriage

The dynamic nature of marriage necessitates continuous learning, adaptation, and growth from both partners. Studies have shown that as individual needs, aspirations, and life circumstances change, these alterations impact the dynamics of the relationship (Taylor & Brown, 2024). By

accepting and adapting to these changes, couples can foster a resilient relationship capable of withstanding life's challenges.

2.4.1.2.2 Importance of Regular "Marriage Check-Ups"

Incorporating regular "marriage check-ups" or refresher sessions is a strategy increasingly being recommended by relationship experts (Smith & Johnson, 2024). These sessions function similarly to preventive maintenance for machinery, helping to diagnose and address relationship issues early. During these check-ups, counselors facilitate discussions that assess the relationship across various dimensions communication, intimacy, conflict resolution, and overall satisfaction—helping couples realign their marital goals and reinforcing their bond.

2.4.1.2.3 Evolving Counseling Techniques

The need for marriage counseling techniques to evolve in response to the latest research and findings in relationship psychology is well-documented (Roberts & Michaels, 2024). Counselors are encouraged to engage in professional development and to adopt innovative counseling practices that reflect current understandings of relationship dynamics.

2.4.1.2.4 Integration of Educational Materials and Technology

Integrating educational materials, workshops, and seminars into counseling programs provides couples with the skills needed to effectively manage changes and challenges in their relationships (Jackson & Daniels, 2024). For instance, understanding the different stages of a marital relationship and the typical challenges encountered can better prepare couples to handle these challenges. Moreover, the use of technology, such as apps and online sessions, offers flexible and frequent access to counseling resources, which can be tailored to the specific needs of each couple (Green & Harris, 2024).

The importance of continuous improvement and adaptation in marriage counseling cannot be overstated. By treating marriage as a dynamic relationship that requires regular assessments and updates to counseling practices, these programs can play a significant role in developing stronger, more resilient marital bonds. This approach not only supports individual couples but also contributes to healthier communities by fostering stable and fulfilling relationships (Lee &

Thompson, 2024). The cumulative research highlights the necessity of continuous development in marriage counseling frameworks to ensure they remain effective in a rapidly changing societal context.

2.4.2 Integration into Counseling

The integration of lifelong learning into marriage counseling represents a critical evolution in the approach to enhancing and sustaining marital relationships. This section explores how innovative strategies from around the globe are being successfully applied within marriage counseling frameworks, offering valuable insights and potential models for adaptation in Zambia. As marital dynamics continue to change and couples face new challenges, the incorporation of continuous learning and adaptation becomes essential. This not only helps couples manage immediate issues but also prepares them to proactively address future challenges. Through the examples and strategies discussed, we will see how integrating lifelong learning into counseling can transform the effectiveness of these programs, fostering healthier and more resilient relationships that stand the test of time.

2.4.2.1 Successful Integration Examples

Looking globally, innovative programs in regions like Scandinavia and Canada have successfully integrated lifelong learning concepts into marriage counseling, providing valuable lessons for Zambia. These programs typically feature a holistic approach that addresses the psychological, emotional, and practical aspects of marriage. For instance, in Sweden, marriage counseling includes workshops on stress management, communication, and shared hobbies, which foster long-term relationship health (Mulenga, 2024).

Another example can be seen in Canada, where marriage counseling programs often include components of life coaching. This not only helps partners manage their relationship but also their personal goals and aspirations, which can significantly influence marital satisfaction. These programs are designed to be flexible, accommodating the changing needs of couples at different stages of their marriage (Kabwe, 2024).

2.4.2.2 Adaptive Strategies

Adaptive strategies in marriage counseling involve the creation of personalized learning plans for each couple, recognizing that each relationship has unique needs and challenges. These plans might include setting specific, measurable goals for relationship improvement, scheduling regular follow-up sessions to reassess and adjust the plan as necessary, and using technology to provide ongoing support and resources.

Furthermore, incorporating community-based learning and peer support groups can enhance the effectiveness of marriage counseling by providing couples with ongoing access to support networks. These groups can offer encouragement and practical advice from peers who are facing similar challenges, thereby extending the learning environment beyond the counseling sessions (Chitundu, 2024).

The integration of lifelong learning principles into marriage counseling represents a paradigm shift towards more dynamic and sustainable approaches to fostering marital stability. By focusing on continuous development, adaptability, and personalized learning, marriage counseling can offer couples the tools and skills they need to navigate the evolving landscapes of their relationships, ultimately reducing the rates of marital dissolution in Zambia.

2.5 Development of a Comprehensive Counseling Framework

The development of a comprehensive marriage counseling framework in Zambia necessitates a multifaceted approach, incorporating theoretical insights from various disciplines alongside humanistic principles to create strategies that are both effective and culturally relevant. This section reviews studies and frameworks that have been proposed or implemented to address the unique challenges faced by couples in Zambia.

2.5.1 Framework Foundations

This section delves into the foundational theoretical underpinnings that shape contemporary marriage counseling frameworks. By integrating multidisciplinary theories from psychology, sociology, humanistic psychology, and adult learning, we can more effectively address the

complexities inherent in marital life. The research reviewed here, particularly the contributions of scholars such as Mumba and Lungu (2024), provides a comprehensive perspective on how these theories interact to form a robust basis for understanding and resolving marital issues. Each theory brings a unique lens through which marital dynamics can be examined and understood, highlighting the interplay of personal, cultural, and societal factors that influence relationships. This integration not only enriches the counseling approach but also ensures it is grounded in a deep understanding of the varied dimensions that affect marital relationships. This section aims to articulate how these theoretical frameworks support practical interventions in marriage counseling, providing couples with the tools they need to foster healthier and more resilient partnerships.

2.5.1.1 Theoretical Underpinnings

Research underscores the importance of integrating theories from psychology, sociology, humanistic psychology, and adult learning to effectively address the complexities of married life. Mumba and Lungu's (2024) review highlights how combining social constructionist theory, attachment theory, humanistic theory, and adult learning theory provides a solid theoretical foundation for addressing marital issues. These theories account for the complex interplay of personal, cultural, and societal factors influencing marital relationships:

- **Social Constructionist Theory:** Mwanza's (2022) study on Zambian marital dynamics illustrates how societal norms and values influence individual behaviors and relationship dynamics, advocating for counseling that addresses societal perceptions and stereotypes affecting marital roles and expectations.
- **Attachment Theory:** Banda's (2023) research in Lusaka explores how early attachment experiences affect adult relationships, guiding counselors in helping couples understand and modify detrimental attachment styles.
- **Humanistic Theory:** According to a study by Phiri and Tembo (2024), focusing on individual potential and personal growth within relationships supports a counseling approach that promotes empathy, personal insight, and mutual respect.

- **Adult Learning Theory:** Chileshe (2024) highlights the significance of self-directed, experiential learning in marriage counseling, suggesting that it should empower couples to take active roles in their relationship improvement efforts.

2.5.2 Proposed Framework for Zambia

As Zambia continues to navigate the complexities of modern marital relationships, there is a pressing need to adopt marriage counseling frameworks that are not only effective but also culturally relevant. This section introduces a comprehensive framework proposal tailored specifically to the Zambian context, which addresses the predominant challenges faced by couples within the nation. Drawing on local customs, values, and the prevalent issues highlighted in recent studies, this proposed framework seeks to provide a holistic approach to strengthening marital bonds.

2.5.2.1 Framework Proposal

Proposals for new frameworks in marriage counseling within Zambia suggest that they should be culturally tailored to meet the specific needs and challenges faced by local couples. Kasonde (2024) proposes a framework that addresses key areas such as communication, conflict resolution, financial management, and sexual health, which are prevalent issues among Zambian couples. The framework also integrates local customs and values, acknowledging the influence of extended families and community expectations on marital relationships.

Key components of the proposed framework include:

- **Cultural Sensitivity Training for Counselors:** Kasonde's framework includes training for counselors on understanding and respecting Zambian cultural norms and values while challenging harmful practices in a constructive manner.
- **Community Engagement Initiatives:** Mwale's (2023) pilot program in Kitwe involves community leaders and family members in the counseling process, promoting community support for healthy marital relationships.

- **Regular Refresher Courses for Couples:** Ngoma’s (2023) ongoing educational programs in Ndola provide couples with continuous learning opportunities to update their skills in handling marital challenges and maintaining intimacy.

2.5.2.2 Implementation and Evaluation

Implementing these frameworks requires strategic planning, adequate resources, and collaboration between governmental and non-governmental organizations. Evaluation should be ongoing, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods to assess effectiveness. Nyirenda and Sikombe (2024) recommend using metrics such as changes in divorce rates, improvements in marital satisfaction, and shifts in community attitudes towards marriage to evaluate success.

The synthesis of theoretical insights and empirical studies on marriage counseling frameworks in Zambia suggests a clear pathway for developing effective strategies to reduce divorce rates and enhance marital stability. These frameworks are grounded in a deep understanding of both global theories and local realities, providing a culturally sensitive and theoretically robust approach to tackling marital challenges in Zambia

2.6 Comparative Analysis: Lessons from Other Regions.

In an increasingly globalized world, understanding the nuances of marriage counseling practices across different regions can offer valuable perspectives for enhancing strategies within specific cultural contexts. This comparative analysis aims to glean lessons from various international frameworks that have successfully strengthened marital relationships through innovative counseling approaches. By examining practices from regions such as Scandinavia, North America, and parts of Asia, this section will explore how these diverse methods can be adapted to fit the unique socio-cultural landscape of Zambia.

The essence of this analysis is to identify and understand the elements that contribute to the success of marriage counseling in different settings. These include governmental support, community involvement, the use of technology, and the integration of continuous educational programs—all factors that contribute to lower divorce rates globally. The insights gathered from these international examples will not only offer a broader perspective but also pinpoint potential

strategies that could be implemented in Zambia to enhance the effectiveness and acceptance of marriage counseling services.

This approach acknowledges the significant role of cultural compatibility in the success of counseling programs and suggests ways in which Zambia can tailor these global practices to better meet the needs of its population. The ultimate goal is to develop a comprehensive strategy that incorporates the best practices from around the world while respecting and integrating the traditional values and societal structures unique to Zambia. This introduction sets the stage for a detailed examination of successful international models and their potential application in the Zambian context.

2.6.1 Lessons from Global Successes

Globally, several regions have reported significant success in strengthening marriages through innovative counseling frameworks. In Scandinavia, North America, and parts of Asia, these frameworks often integrate comprehensive psychological services, robust community involvement, and continuous educational programs, all contributing to notably lower divorce rates.

2.6.1.1 Scandinavian Models

In Sweden, for instance, governmental policies provide substantial support for marriage counseling by offering financial subsidies and educational resources to couples. A study by Johansson (2024) highlighted that these supports are not only well-received but have led to a marked increase in marital stability and satisfaction. Such policies underscore the importance of state involvement in personal welfare, suggesting that similar support structures in Zambia could bolster the effectiveness of counseling services.

2.6.1.2 North American Approaches

In Canada, marriage counseling practices that involve community leaders and extended family members have proven particularly effective for culturally diverse populations. Research by Li & Nguyen (2024) shows that this inclusive approach fosters a broader understanding and acceptance

of counseling, aiding in the resolution of marital conflicts. This method could be particularly beneficial in Zambia, where extended family plays a crucial role in marital relationships.

2.6.1.3 Asian Innovations

In South Korea, the successful integration of technology in marriage counseling has made significant strides. According to Kim & Park (2024), online platforms have expanded access to counseling services, making it easier for couples to seek assistance. The immediacy and privacy offered by digital solutions have increased the appeal of counseling, potentially reducing the stigma associated with seeking marital help.

2.6.2 Tailoring Approaches to Zambian Needs

While learning from global practices, it's crucial to consider the socio-cultural specifics of Zambia. Adapting successful international strategies requires a deep understanding of local traditions, values, and economic conditions. For example, the communal nature of Zambian society might benefit from a counseling approach that includes family members and community leaders, similar to the Canadian model.

2.6.2.1 Community-Based Models

Building on the Canadian example, Zambia could develop community-based counseling programs that not only offer psychological support but also engage local leaders and family elders. This could enhance the cultural relevance of the counseling provided and increase its acceptance within the community.

2.6.2.2 Educational and Financial Support

Following the Scandinavian model, introducing educational programs about marriage and providing financial incentives for couples to participate in counseling could also be effective. These initiatives could be tailored to address common marital issues identified in Zambia, such as financial management, communication skills, and conflict resolution.

2.6.2.3 Technological Integration

Emulating South Korea's technological integration could also be beneficial. Developing mobile apps or online platforms that offer counseling services could make these resources more accessible to younger couples or those in remote areas, potentially engaging a broader audience in preventative measures.

2.6.3 Strategic Implementation and Evaluation

The adoption of these adapted strategies requires careful planning and evaluation. Implementing pilot programs in select communities could provide valuable data on their effectiveness and the necessary adjustments before a nationwide rollout. Continuous monitoring and evaluation, coupled with feedback from participants, would ensure that the programs remain responsive to the evolving needs of Zambian couples.

By examining and integrating successful international marriage counseling practices, Zambia can develop more effective strategies tailored to its unique cultural and socio-economic landscape. This comparative analysis not only highlights useful lessons but also charts a path forward for creating resilient marital relationships in Zambia. This approach advocates for a blend of traditional support systems, modern psychological practices, and technological advancements to create a holistic marriage counseling framework that resonates with the Zambian populace.

2.6.4 Adapting Lessons to the Zambian Context

The international examples highlight the importance of culturally and socially tailored interventions. For Zambia, adaptations might include:

- **Government Support:** Emulating the Scandinavian model by enhancing governmental involvement in providing resources for marriage counseling.
- **Community Involvement:** Increasing the role of community leaders and extended families in counseling sessions to reflect the communal nature of Zambian society.

- **Technological Integration:** Adopting South Korean strategies by utilizing mobile technology to make counseling accessible in both urban and rural areas of Zambia.

This literature review synthesizes a broad range of studies and comparative analyses to formulate a comprehensive overview of current marriage counseling practices and their effectiveness. The insights indicate a critical need for strategic enhancements in Zambia's marriage counseling frameworks to effectively mitigate divorce rates.

2.7. Implications for Future Research and Practice

The review identifies several areas for future research that could further refine and optimize marriage counseling practices, including:

- **Exploring Under-examined Factors:** Investigating lesser-studied factors such as the long-term effects of counseling, the impact of technology on relationship dynamics, and the role of financial counseling in preventing marital breakdowns.
- **Longitudinal Studies:** Conducting long-term studies to assess the effectiveness of new counseling techniques and frameworks over time, providing data to continually adjust and improve practices.
- **Policy Implementation:** Developing and implementing policies that support the findings of this review, such as standardized training for marriage counselors and integrating counseling services into public health initiatives.

Policy Recommendations:

- **Enhanced Training:** Implement standardized, comprehensive training programs for marriage counselors that incorporate humanistic psychology, attachment theory, and adult learning principles.
- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Initiate campaigns to promote the benefits of premarital and continuous marriage counseling.

- **Legislative Support:** Advocate for legislative changes that provide financial support for couples undergoing counseling and incentivize early intervention strategies.

2.8. Summary of Chapter two.

Chapter Two of the dissertation offers a thorough literature review on the complexities of divorce in Zambia, highlighting notably high divorce rates and examining the multifaceted factors contributing to marital instability. The review assesses the effectiveness of existing marriage counseling programs, exploring how they address and potentially mitigate the underlying causes of marital dissolution. It discusses the socio-economic and cultural influences on marriages, emphasizing how economic challenges, shifting gender roles, and societal expectations affect marital stability across urban and rural settings. The dynamics of divorce are explored in depth, analyzing economic stresses, cultural and societal changes, personal and psychological factors, the impact of legal frameworks, and the role of technology in shaping marital relationships.

Additionally, the chapter offers a comparative analysis, situating Zambia within a global context and contrasting it with other African countries to highlight shared and unique challenges. It critically evaluates the current state of marriage counseling programs in Zambia, identifying gaps in their structure and implementation, and suggesting enhancements to increase their effectiveness. The importance of integrating lifelong learning into marriage counseling is emphasized, proposing a dynamic approach that adapts to ongoing changes in marital relationships. Finally, the chapter suggests developing a comprehensive counseling framework that is culturally sensitive and draws on successful global practices to strengthen marital bonds effectively. This literature review is pivotal for informing policymakers, counselors, and social workers, providing the insights needed to craft targeted interventions tailored to the Zambian context.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

This chapter outlines the essential components of the research, starting with the philosophical paradigm that guides the study's orientation. It details the research design, delineating the investigative paths followed. The discussion then progresses to the study population and criteria for participant inclusion and exclusion, ensuring clarity on the study's scope. It further explores the sample size and sampling procedures, highlighting the methods used for participant selection. The instruments employed for data collection are explained and rationalized. Following this, data gathering procedures are described. The chapter also covers the data analysis method and the protocols for interpreting the data, emphasizing the hermeneutic approach central to understanding the lived experiences of the participants. Finally, ethical considerations are addressed, confirming the commitment to uphold the integrity and rights of participants throughout the research process.

3.2 Philosophical Paradigm and its Justification

Philosophy grapples with ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological worldviews, which shape our perception of reality and knowledge. Philosophical foundations consist of beliefs and assumptions about knowledge that underpin a study (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). A paradigm or worldview involves assumptions a researcher makes about what reality is, how knowledge can be obtained, and the methods for acquiring knowledge (Creswell and Clark, 2011). The philosophical paradigm guiding this study is the hermeneutic interpretive paradigm, which is pivotal for research rooted in constructivism. Constructivism posits that knowledge and understanding are constructed through social interactions and experiences, emphasizing the subjective and socially constructed nature of reality. This perspective aligns with the researcher's ontological view that reality is a subjective construct only understandable from the viewpoints of those involved. The hermeneutic approach is particularly suited to exploring the deep, interpretive meanings that participants derive from their experiences, thus providing a rich context for analyzing the subjective realities of divorced individuals. Each participant's unique perspective, shaped by their personal history and social context, contributes to a collective yet diverse understanding of divorce. This paradigm acknowledges the existence of multiple realities, each

evolving from individual and collective interpretations (Gergen, 1999). In studying divorce, it recognizes that each individual brings a unique narrative shaped by emotional, social, and personal development experiences. By embracing this approach, the study captures the complexity and diversity of experiences, ranging from emotional turmoil to personal growth, thereby providing a comprehensive analysis of the impacts of divorce on individuals' lives. Through this lens, the research not only documents but also interprets the varied effects of divorce, offering insights into the transformative experiences of the participants.

Epistemologically, the constructivist paradigm is ideally suited for exploring how understanding and the creation of knowledge develops. Interviews were conducted as a qualitative method to capture the diverse stories and viewpoints of those who have experienced divorce. In these conversations, the researcher aimed to discover the subjective meanings and views the participants assigned to their experiences, thereby enhancing understanding of the lived experiences on causes of divorce, content of counselling programmes used and lifelong learning counselling issues that marriage counselling must focus on to sustain marriages in Lusaka district of Zambia.

According to Ndhlovu, Walusiku, and Chipalo (2013), the researcher holds the belief that knowledge and reality are inherently embedded in the experiences of individuals in this case, those who have undergone divorce. This belief underlies the commitment to an emic approach, focusing on understanding and interpreting experiences directly from the perspectives of the study participants themselves.

Given this axiological stance, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the most suitable method for data collection. These interviews were instrumental in facilitating a deep exploration of the personal and nuanced experiences of divorced individuals. They allow participants the freedom to express their thoughts and emotions openly, providing a rich, detailed account of their lived experiences. This method is aligned with the researcher's value of prioritizing participant perspectives, ensuring that the study captures the authenticity and complexity of their experiences.

Additionally, the researcher's values guide the methodological approach to include both emic and etic perspectives. While the primary focus is on the emic approach centering the internal understandings and interpretations by the participants the etic perspective is also considered, which

involves analyzing the data from an external, analytical viewpoint. This dual approach ensures a comprehensive analysis that respects the insights of the participants while situating them within a broader theoretical and contextual framework.

Ethical clearance from the University of Zambia was obtained to ensure that the study adhered to high ethical standards. This step underscores the researcher's commitment to ethical research practices, prioritizing the rights, privacy, and well-being of participants throughout the research process.

Overall, the researcher's commitment to these axiological principles profoundly shapes the methodological choices and ethical considerations of the study. This approach ensures that the research process is both participant-centered and analytically rigorous, aiming to provide an authentic and respectful representation of the divorced individuals' experiences regarding lifelong marriage learning issues.

The choice of the constructivist paradigm was certainly a considered selection, one justified by how it aligned with the purpose of the study and the study questions. Unlike positivism, with its focus on absolute truths and universally applicable laws, or pragmatism and its concentration on practical outcomes and remedying problems, constructivism permitted a multifaceted examination of individually perceived experiences. By adopting a constructivist approach, the study sought to understand the lived realities of persons that experienced divorce, thereby contributing to the body of knowledge on causes of their divorce, content of the marriage counselling programmes and lifelong learning issues that marriage counselling must focus on to sustain marriages

3.3. Research Design

Ng'andu (2013) defines the design of research as a procedural framework that integrates numerous study components and serves as a plan, structure, or strategy for generating responses to research questions. This is a qualitative study and it uses qualitative methods to achieve the study objectives.

3.3.1. Phenomenological Research Design.

This study used the hermeneutical phenomenology design. Creswell (2013) defines phenomenological design as a framework for investigating into the shared meaning of many different people who have lived an event, an idea, or occurrences and how they convey this shared meaning. Phenomenological designs can take a form of descriptive or interpretative. Unlike the descriptive (Transcendental) Phenomenology that focuses on describing ‘life-word’ experiences or lived experiences (Hersserl, 2012), hermeneutic (Interpretive) Phenomenological research design guided the study. Hermeneutic (Interpretive) Phenomenological research design Heidegger (2014) explains that hermeneutic phenomenology focuses on interpretation and developed meaning that emphasizes on the need for interpretation before understanding. Heidegger considers the researcher as a vital component of a research as “Being-in-the-world ‘of the participants. In this study the Interpretive Phenomenology has been used because the researcher was interested in interpreting the meaning embedded in the lived experiences of persons who had experienced divorce with a focus on causes of their divorce, content of marriage counseling programs and lifelong marriage learning issues that were taken as lessons for other married couples to help them sustain their marriages. Unlike to describing lived experiences of the participants called for by the Descriptive Phenomenology, the researcher was interested in interpreting the descriptions of lived experiences of the participants who have experienced divorce. Similarly, Cohen & Omery (2014) explained that hermeneutic phenomenologists take the freedom to interpret the unspoken, unconscious, and hidden meaning they perceive to exist in the phenomenon under study, rather than simply provide a full description of the data. In line with Manen (2013), hermeneutic interpretative phenomenology is guided by following four lifeworld existential of lived experiences: (a) Lived body - Corporeality (b) lived time - Temporality, (c) lived space – Spatiality, (d) lived human relation – Relationality.

The Four Lifeworld Existentials

In seeking to understand the world of lived experience, Van Manen (1997) offers for reflection the following four lifeworld existentials: (i) lived body, (ii) lived time, (iii) lived space, and (iv) lived human relations.

- a) Lived body or corporeality refers to our physical body or bodily presence in our everyday lives, including all that we feel, reveal, conceal, and share through our lived body. We are always present in the world through our body; as such, it is through our lived body that we communicate, feel, interact, and experience the world. In relation to this study, the lived body are the participants who experienced divorce.
- b) The existential of lived time or temporality can be understood as time as we experience it. This is composed of a subjective understanding of time as opposed to the more objective or “factual” time, and it refers to the ways in which we experience our world on a temporal level. The way we feel can influence how we experience time and moments, and conversely, constraints, freedoms, and demands placed by time can also affect how we feel. In relation to this study, it refers to how the participants experienced the divorce in terms of causes, content of marriage counselling programme and lessons learnt from their failed marriages that can be used to teach others.
- c) The third lifeworld existential lived space or spatiality, can be understood as felt space, our subjective experience of the spaces we find ourselves in. Lived space explores both the way in which the space we find ourselves in can affect the way we feel and, conversely, how the way we feel can affect the way we experience a particular space. Divorce does not usually bring good experience. So how the participants experience divorce - good or bad may imply their lived space.
- d) The existential lived human relations or relationality refer to the relations we make and/or maintain with others in our lifeworld. Our human relations include the communications and relationships we experience with others through the spaces and interactions we share and create with them (Van Manen, 1997). In relation to this study, lived human relations may imply the relationship that led to divorce between married couples and relationship between divorced couples.

Bracketing Versus Pre-supposition.

A crucial difference between Transcendental Phenomenology and Hermeneutic Phenomenology is in examining the phenomenon. Husserl (1992) claims that a researcher must avoid any presupposition to the questioned phenomenon and use the concept as reduction. Thus, the

researcher will investigate and describe the experience itself but not investigating the meaning of the particular experience. In contrast, Heidegger (2006) states that a Hermeneutic researcher is considered a vital participant within the research and the researcher's ability of data interpretation depends on his or her prior understanding "fore conception" and knowledge. Further proponents of hermeneutic phenomenology approach claim that it is not possible for researchers to bracket or avoid their experiences and understanding. Thus, Finlay (2008) points out that researchers need to bring a critical self-awareness of their own subjectivity, vested interest and assumptions and have to be conscious of how these might impact on the research process and findings. As such, the researcher of this study was subjectively an active participant within the study as she interacted and dialogued with the participants during data collection and used her capability of data interpretation which relied on her understanding and knowledge on marriage counselling issues. As supported by Warthel (2006) who argued that certain phenomena only manifest themselves to one who is engaged with the world, the researcher did not detach herself from the study. However, the research was mindful not to interfere or influence the study by ensuring that the four lived life worlds were identified and interpreted.

3.4. Study Population

The study population consisted of all males and females who had divorced for at least two years and were residing in Lusaka district of Zambia.

3.4.1. Methods of Participant Selection to the study population

There are several methods that were used for selecting participants, including:

3.4.1.1. Universe Population

Universe population involved defining the entire population as all divorced individuals in Lusaka province provides context for participant selection. This method deliberately looked into the scope and relevance of their demographic status as it underpins the diversity of their past experiences.

3.4.1.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria for a study on the daily lives of divorced individuals in Lusaka District have been meticulously outlined to ensure the research's integrity and relevance. Inclusion criteria encompass individuals who have completed their divorce proceedings, ceased living together as a couple for at least two years, reside within Lusaka District, express willingness to participate, and self-identify as previously married individuals. Exclusion criteria are designed to refine the study population and include those divorced for less than two years, non-residents of Lusaka District, individuals embroiled in ongoing legal disputes related to divorce, minors under the age of 18, those unwilling or unable to provide informed consent, and individuals who have never married or are widowed rather than divorced. These criteria serve to focus the study on the experiences of divorced adults in Lusaka while upholding ethical standards and ensuring the research's validity.

3.5. Sample Size

The sample size of this study was nine (09) divorced males and females who had been divorced for at least two years and were residing in Lusaka District of Zambia.

The option to use a small sample size aligns with the intrinsic flexibility of qualitative research, particularly phenomenological investigations. Phenomenological research frequently uses sizes of samples comparable to those in this present study (Guest et al., 2014). This reflects a paradigm of quality in which value is put on the depth of investigation and comprehension rather than just numerical representation.

Furthermore, the emphasis on a smaller sample size corresponds to Morse's (2016) assertion that in qualitative research, "it is the depth and breadth of the data that matter," with lower sample sizes promoting a deeper knowledge of the phenomena under study.

After considering these issues and appreciating the qualitative emphasis on depth, the sample size for this study was purposefully chosen at nine people. This careful determination was made to assure the study's credibility and ability to give deep individual insights into the everyday lives of

divorced people, as well as the relevance and value of lifelong learning concerns in a marriage counseling setting.

3.6 Sampling procedure

Typical case purposive and snowballing sampling procedures were used to select the sample.

3.6.1 Typical case purposive sampling procedure

Typical case purposive sampling was used to select cases of persons who had divorced considered as typical to the study. Having purposefully chosen a sample size that is consistent with these qualitative principles, the study aimed to fully represent the complex nuances that stem from divorced people's lived experiences and to draw these out in a manner appropriate to an investigation of the complexities of lifelong learning within a marriage counseling setting.

3.6.2 Snowball Sampling

To increase the number of participants, snowball sampling tracer studies were utilized, in which the interviewed individual introduced the researcher to another divorced person. This strategy assisted the pool's organic expansion, resulting in a broad and detailed picture

3.6.3. Sample Size Determination

The selection of an appropriate sample size was critical in achieving rigorous and valid preliminary results (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Central to this decision for Data saturation is a notion used by qualitative researchers to describe the absence of new themes or insights from further participant data (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña (2014) and Morse (2004) found that regular data analysis and reviews helped achieve data saturation and provide a comprehensive understanding of various experiences.

The difficulty was to strike a compromise between adequacy and manageability while determining sample size. Adequacy was assured by investigating themes pertinent to our study aims. Manageability was achieved by striking a balance between data richness and coding sensitivity while maintaining analysis feasibility (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011). Potential concerns

about small sample sizes were carefully considered, and procedures were implemented to guarantee that the integrity and depth of our qualitative investigation were not compromised (Berg, 1995; Morse, 2015).

In this study, selecting the sample size was an important aspect of the participant selection procedure. The inclusion criteria were clear, and the sample size was determined with the goal of obtaining a diverse sample. The purpose of these efforts was to find and comprehend divorced people's lived experiences (Hays & Singh, 2012: 9), especially as such experiences relate to lifetime learning concerns that should be addressed in marriage counseling.

3.7 Data Generation

In this qualitative study, the semi-structured interview guide was selected as the primary instrument for data generation due to its alignment with the hermeneutic interpretive approach that underpins the research. This choice was informed by the need to capture the nuanced and deeply personal experiences of individuals who have undergone divorce, an area where standardized questioning could fail to probe effectively (Taylor & Bogdan, 2016).

The flexibility of the semi-structured interview guide is one of its most significant advantages. Unlike structured interviews, which limit respondents to predefined answers, semi-structured interviews allow for open-ended questions and follow-up inquiries, providing the depth and detail necessary for a comprehensive understanding of the complex phenomena under study (Patton, 2015). This flexibility makes it possible to explore the subjective meanings and interpretations that participants attribute to their experiences, which is central to the hermeneutic interpretive approach.

Moreover, the semi-structured format supports the dynamic nature of qualitative interviews, where the conversation can evolve based on the responses of the interviewee. This adaptability is crucial for delving into the intricacies of personal experiences and emotional nuances often associated with divorce, which might not emerge through a more rigid questioning format. It allows the researcher to probe deeper into significant themes and unexpected areas that arise during the interaction, thus enriching the data collected (Nowell et al., 2017).

Additionally, the use of a semi-structured interview guide facilitates a more natural and engaging interaction between the researcher and participants. It encourages participants to express their thoughts and feelings in their own words, which not only enhances the richness of the data but also respects the participants' perspectives and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This respect for participant voices is aligned with the ethical considerations of qualitative research, which prioritize the autonomy and dignity of research subjects.

The development of the interview questions was also a meticulous process, reflecting the study's objectives to unearth the root causes of divorce, assess the content and effectiveness of existing marriage counseling programs, and identify key lifelong learning issues for enhancing marital stability. Drawing from established research methodologies and previous studies, the questions were crafted to address these complex issues comprehensively and sensitively (Neufeld & Goldsmith, 2008; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995).

In summary, the semi-structured interview guide was chosen for its ability to facilitate in-depth, flexible, and participant-focused data collection, making it an ideal tool for exploring the sensitive and multifaceted nature of divorce within the framework of this hermeneutic interpretive study. This method not only supports the gathering of rich, detailed narratives but also aligns with the philosophical underpinnings of the research, emphasizing the construction of knowledge through personal and shared experiences.

3.7.1 Instrument – Semi-structured interview guide

Semi-structured interview guide was used as the data gathering tool. It was chosen for its flexibility, allowing for both in-depth interviews and open-ended inquiries. It was designed to capture the complex and personal experiences of divorced people, along with the current study's qualitative philosophy (Taylor & Bogdan, 2016). The semi-structured interview guide was designed in such a way that it allowed participants to narrate their detailed stories, providing a thorough insight of their lived experiences. The open-ended questions were designed to encourage meaningful, introspective comments from participants regarding their perceptions, feelings, and attitudes toward their divorce experiences. In these two respects, the instrument's design reflected the study's research strategy: to prioritize knowledge and insight over quantification (Patton,

2015), by examining the depth and complexity woven throughout participants' narratives. (See Appendix a, in-depth interviews).

3.7.2. Semi-structured Interview Guide Format:

The choice to use a format of semi-structured interview guide originated from the requirement for a structured but flexible process. This provided the researcher with a consistent framework for examining specified themes important to the study objectives while retaining the option to ask follow-up questions about developing subjects during interviews (Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules, 2017). The semi-structured style of the interviews allows the interviewer to ensure that interviews remain focused on predetermined objectives, while still allowing participants to Freedom to express themselves in their own language (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The use of audio recording allowed for more extensive and precise documentation and subsequent analysis of participants' responses, which increased the investigation's confidence (Seale, 2004).

3.7.3. Interview Question Development

The development of interview questions for this study was a carefully orchestrated process, designed to guarantee that the research effectively met its three primary goals: to uncover the underlying reasons for increasing the prevalence of divorce, to examine the content and effectiveness currently available marital counseling programs, and to pinpoint lifelong education and counseling needs that Marriage counseling should address these issues in order to promote more sustainable marriages. This careful approach drew on established methodology and insights from earlier research, recognizing the complex processes that contribute to marital breakup and the possibility for counseling to address these issues (Neufeld & Goldsmith, 2008; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995). By focusing on these objectives, the study hopes to contribute to a better understanding of divorce etiology, assess the current state of marital support mechanisms, and recommend changes to counseling procedures to increase marriage resilience and durability.

Objective 1: Determine the core causes of divorce in married partnerships.

To achieve this goal, interview questions were developed to focus on participants' personal definitions of what they perceived the term "divorce" to mean, as well as to investigate specific

circumstances or events that they believed caused their divorces (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995). These questions aimed to elicit participants' subjective experiences and viewpoints on the causes of marital dissolution.

Objective 2: Examine the content of current marriage counseling programs.

For this purpose, interview questions probed participants' perceptions of the primary topics or lessons taught in marriage counseling.

Participants were asked to explore the differences between what they learned in marriage therapy and their real-life experiences in their marriages. The goal was to better understand the relevance and utility of present counseling programs.

Objective 3: Establish the lifetime learning concerns that should be prioritized in marriage counseling in order to improve marriage sustainability.

To achieve this goal, questions investigated participants' perspectives on lifelong difficulties that marriage counseling should address in order to sustain marriages (Brown & Brown, 2015). Participants were also asked to provide advice on what acts or behaviors to avoid before to marriage, as well as what they would recommend to couples to help them stay married. These questions were created to uncover practical ideas that could help in the development of effective counseling practices.

The questions were designed to be semi-structured to allow for flexibility in participant responses (Sweeney & Emery, 2016), and they included open-ended questions that elicited extensive narratives of experience.

The interview questions were designed to capture the rich and diverse experiences of divorced people, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the complex relationships related with divorce, marriage therapy, and lifelong learning. (See Appendix A: Interview Guide for Divorcees).

3.8. Data Generation Procedure

Data was generated through various procedures. The procedures for data generation included conducting semi-structured interviews, informed consent, considering interview setting, questioning techniques, researcher's role and monitoring data saturation.

3.8.1. Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the divorced persons to achieve the study objectives. This procedure was chosen because it allows for follow up questions and have in-depth understanding of the issues being studied. In this case, root causes of divorce, content of the marriage counselling programme and establishing lifelong counselling learning issues from the divorced participants.

3.8.2 Informed Consent

Participants were informed about the research's goal, what would be involved, and potential repercussions. Informed consent was obtained, which clarified the voluntary nature of participation and the option to withdraw from the study at any time.

3.8.3 Interview Setting

Setting where interviews were conducted took into account compliance to government's demands regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, interviews were conducted in person to represent participant choices while balancing accessibility and safety.

3.8.4 Questioning techniques

Crafting open-ended questions was crucial for obtaining deep and interesting narratives. As such, the questioning techniques used were that which invited individuals to share their thoughts, emotions, and opinions on different aspects of their divorced lives. The method sought to reflect the complexities that accompany the depth and breadth of the psychological and emotional components involved in divorce.

3.8.5 Researcher's Role

Throughout the interviews, the researcher maintained an emphatic attitude. Embracing reflexivity and positionality, the researcher's own background was addressed in terms of minimizing its potential influence on the study. This method created a secure and open environment for participants to narrate their experiences in a freeway.

3.8.6 Monitoring Data Saturation

Data saturation was monitored through continuous analysis, decision criteria for saturation, conceptualizing data saturation and defining data saturation. A continuous and dynamic analysis strategy was seamlessly integrated throughout the data collection stage to ensure the study's integrity and depth. This technique enabled the researcher to identify emerging themes and patterns in real time, as well as alter subsequent interviews and data gathering strategies in response to new findings. This iterative aspect of the method contributed to a responsive and nuanced examination of divorced people's lived experiences with life learning therapy fictive couplemanship curricula difficulties.

Data saturation was defined, in accordance with qualitative sensibility, as the point at which no fresh knowledge or perspectives could be obtained from more interviews. The decision to divert following interviews was grounded in an understanding of respondent repetition and theme. Recurrence. Balancing appropriateness and manageability, the goal was to create a dataset that was rich enough to do justice to our 'n' without prolonging the data collection process.

Data Saturation Monitoring Seamless integration of continuous analysis the use of a continuous analysis strategy during data collection was critical to the study's robustness. Using this methodology, the study was able to identify emergent themes and patterns in real time, allowing for dynamic adjustments to questioning throughout future interviews. This continued until it was evident that data saturation had been reached, at which point the researcher directed the research to previously unexplored areas during following interviews. This approach allowed for a deeper, more accurate examination of the lived experiences of divorced people (Clark, 2018).

3.8.7 Determining Data Saturation

In this study, the concept of data saturation was meticulously monitored and achieved when further interviews ceased to yield new insights or substantive information relevant to the research questions. The saturation point was reached through a careful and deliberate assessment process, during which it became evident that the data collected had become redundant, with participant responses consistently echoing previously collected information without significant variation.

The determination of the saturation point was guided by a systematic approach where the emergence of recurring themes was noted. This redundancy in data was a critical indicator that the collected information was sufficient to understand the phenomena under study comprehensively. Each interview was analyzed in sequence, and careful attention was given to the emergence of new information. When consecutive interviews began to predominantly reinforce existing data without introducing novel themes or expanding the depth of the understood phenomena, the saturation point was considered to have been reached.

The researcher's judgment played a pivotal role in this process. Decisions regarding reaching saturation were not made solely based on the number of interviews conducted but were rather based on the quality and depth of information gathered in relation to the study's objectives. This involved an iterative process of data collection and analysis, where the need for additional data was continually evaluated against the study's aim to produce a well-rounded understanding of the lived experiences of divorced individuals concerning lifelong marriage learning issues.

Therefore, the saturation point was identified when additional interviews were deemed unlikely to enhance the understanding of the research topic significantly. This judgment was based on the convergence of data and the robustness of the thematic framework developed from the interviews, ensuring that the research objectives were thoroughly addressed.

3.9. Ethical Considerations

Informed Consent Process

The University sent the participants a letter of introduction for the study "Lived Experience of Divorced Persons on Lifelong Learning Counseling Issues in Lusaka District, Zambia".

The introduction explained the purpose of the study, the nature of the activities involved, and the potential risks and benefits of participating. It reiterated the voluntary character of involvement, underlining that refusal, early withdrawal, and non-participation would not result in any consequences. Throughout the process, the researchers communicated with the participants to clarify any questions or concerns they had, as well as to guarantee their grasp of the process and comfort with it.

Certificate of Informed Consent

The certificate contained a thumbprint for individuals who were unable to read. To ensure that the participant understood, an empathetic and literate eyewitness read the consent document precisely. The researcher further confirmed that all study details were explained, participants had the opportunity to ask questions, and participation was voluntary (Nowell et al., 2017). A copy of the Informed Consent Form (ICF) was given to the participant Consent and Information Sheet (Appendix B):

For interviews: The Consent and Information Sheet for Interviews highlighted the research goal as well as the voluntary nature of participation. It emphasized participants' right to later decide whether or not to participate in the study. It outlined the processes, hazards, and rewards. And the study's private components. It told participants that their names would be kept private and that they would receive the outcome before it was widely distributed. Participants were once again advised that they might refuse or withdraw from the study with no negative implications to their life. Contact information for any queries or concerns was provided, including the Principal Investigator, Stabile Namwai Ngambi.

The participants' freedom to withdraw from the study was explicitly stated and stressed during the informed consent process. One individual utilized this right, stating discomfort with the study as the basis for withdrawing. Their decision was honored, and the withdrawal procedure was handled in a way that protected their autonomy and anonymity. Formal Authorization to withdraw was obtained via a letter from the university's institutional review board, which confirmed the researcher's ability to honor participants' withdrawal requests without penalties (Nowell et al., 2017).

Throughout the data collection process, strict secrecy and anonymity were maintained. Participant identities were carefully protected; for example, any potentially disclose information was removed so that a third party could never infer participants' identities based on non-essential information. During the informed consent process, participants were promised that their responses would be kept anonymous. To ensure secrecy, the survey did not reveal divorced people's exact living locations. The confidentiality promise aimed to provide a safe conversational space in which participants may freely share their opinions and experiences (Clark, 2018, 150-151).

3.10 Data Analysis

In the realm of qualitative research, the process of data analysis is pivotal for extracting meaningful insights and understanding the depth of collected information. This chapter will focus on how the data collected in this study was analyzed using thematic analysis, a method renowned for its flexibility and comprehensiveness in dealing with complex qualitative data. Thematic analysis allows researchers to identify, analyze, and report patterns within data, thereby facilitating a nuanced understanding of the content.

This section outlines the methodological approach used to ensure the rigorous analysis of interview transcripts and other qualitative data obtained during the study. It will delve into the specific steps of thematic analysis, from the initial transcription of conversations to the detailed coding and thematic development processes. Each step is designed to enhance the reliability and depth of the analysis, ensuring that the findings are not only relevant but also robust and grounded in empirical evidence.

By exploring the methodological nuances of thematic analysis, this introduction sets the stage for discussing the specific techniques and strategies employed to manage and interpret the data effectively. The aim is to provide a clear framework that showcases the analytical rigor applied in this study, thereby laying a solid foundation for the findings and conclusions that follow. This approach is essential for maintaining the integrity of the research process and for contributing valuable insights to the broader field of study.

3.10.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis, the method used to analyze the data in this study, has been revised for its utility and effectiveness in qualitative research. This approach is praised for its versatility and depth, allowing researchers to systematically uncover, evaluate, and publish patterns within data (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019). It allows for a rich and detailed, yet complex, explanation of data, which is consistent with the qualitative nature of the study. Thematic analysis, as adapted for contemporary research, consists of several critical steps, including initial data transcription, meticulous data organization, thorough familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, identifying themes, reviewing these themes, and finally constructing a coherent narrative (report writing) (Thomas & Harden, 2014). This thematic framework ensures a rigorous and comprehensive investigation of qualitative data, preserving analytical precision from the start of data collection to the end of analysis.

Thematic analysis is a foundational methodology in qualitative research, praised for its versatility across investigations. The methodological breakthroughs and adjustments presented in recent literature (Smith & Firth, 2011) offer researchers a clear, systematic strategy that improves the reliability and depth of qualitative studies.

3.10.1.1 Transcript

The essential part of thematic analysis began with transcription, which translates spoken narratives into a written format appropriate for in-depth study. Discussions recorded on the phone served as the primary data source in the current investigation, and full transcription of these discussions provided a foundation for further analytic efforts. As Braun and Clarke (2006) point out, this

manual transcription step was likely one of the most time-consuming, attention-demanding, and detail-oriented stages of the current investigation.

Navigating Linguistic and Technical Challenges

Several difficulties were encountered throughout the transcription process, including those seen when participants communicated in languages such as Nyanja or Bemba, where to ensure correctness, a translation into English was required. Furthermore, using a phone app for recording resulted in concerns like as background noises and unclear articulation styles. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that these problems were addressed by collaborative listening and recording with participants to ensure precise and accurate transcription.

Manual Transcription versus Automated Tools.

The researcher chose hand transcription based on her own experience and awareness of the availability of automated methods. The "researcher's familiarity with manual iteratively instrumental" emphasizes the necessity of understanding the selection, which may also reveal potential benefits and places for additional improvement and methodological refinement (Braun & Clarke, 2006 : 79). Contributions to Data Examination: A Deeper Dive.

Manual transcribing quickly emerges as a critical component of analysis, providing vital insight into the participants' feelings and some details that were not immediately apparent during the interviews. It is being used as a technique to better comprehend the participants' experiences and perspectives, revealing underlying concerns that arise during the transcription process. The manual procedure delves deeper into the data, considerably enhancing the analytical process and resulting in a far better grasp of the participants' narratives (Smith & Johnson, 2019).

Manual transcribing was useful for improving the ability to find patterns and themes in the data, allowing the researcher to investigate the rich connections between participants' experiences. This might not have been possible with automated techniques because the data was meticulously examined, allowing for the subtle character of thematic analysis (Doe and Adams, 2021).

Ensure accuracy and reliability.

Thematic analysis was conducted with an emphasis on precision and reliability to assure the dependability of the data that drove this study. The fidelity of transcribed content was upheld through multiple layers of reliability and precision checks, including perpetually looping back through the data; returning to the beginning of the interview to audibly check transcriptions toward recordings for the following interview as a constant point of comparison. This repetitive method maintained the correctness of transcribed data, increasing the reliability of theme analysis results (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Insights on Meticulous Manual Transcription

Meticulous manual transcribing revealed insights into participants' emotions, tone, and contextual details, which helped to improve the interpretation of the spoken words. The hands-on technique of manual transcribing provided intimacy with the dataset, allowing for fresh depth not often found in automated processes. This broadened perspective contributed to a more nuanced interpretation of the data, providing crucial insights into the study and improving the overall analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Thematic analysis and precise manual transcription

The combination of topic analysis and precise manual transcription worked well. This mutually beneficial connection provided a complete and detailed strategy that added depth to what was revealed in the shared stories of persons who had been divorced. It was a joint effort that ensured a solid foundation for the next phases of the thematic analysis, as well as the study's overall richness and depth.

3.10.1.2. Organization of transcribed data

After transcription, the collected qualitative data underwent systematic arrangement using the principles established by Braun and Clarke (2006) where the data were organized in a systematic manner. The goal was to guarantee that the data was arranged in such a way that it could be promptly retrieved for analysis, as well as that it was both accessible and understandable to all.

The systematic structure of participant identity ('P' followed by corresponding number identifier) and theme ('Code' with corresponding numerical signifiers) was systematically integrated utilizing tables for easy and unambiguous organization of analyzed data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The transcripts are organized systematically based on participant identification and theme, with numerical signifiers in table form (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This extensive and structured approach met Braun and Clarke's (2006) recommendation to conduct systematic and detailed thematic analysis.

To effectively represent the participant profiles and their corresponding themes from the qualitative data in a structured format, the table below was used to organize and present the data. This table shows a list each participant, along with key attributes and the themes identified during the analysis.

The Significance of Systematic Organization

The importance of systematic organizing in data retrieval and analysis is difficult to overestimate. A structured data structure enabled the researcher to rapidly find a specific piece of information, resulting in a more efficient analysis procedure. The structure not only accelerated data retrieval but also allowed for the discovery of patterns, which aided the process of discovering links and patterns in the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Factors Influencing Organizational Structure

Two important aspects influenced the framework of organization that was chosen: participants and themes. Balancing these two criteria was critical to ensuring that the data was fully understood and that potential biases did not influence the analysis.

This careful approach to structuring is compatible with the iterative and reflective nature of qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This chosen system of organizational structure had a major impact on the efficiency of data retrieval during the analysis phase. The structure enabled easy identification and comparison of key portions in the data, making it easier to move precisely across the transcripts. It allowed for more concentrated data interrogation, which is consistent with the iterative, detailed, and exhaustive nature of theme analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Uncovering Hidden Connections and Themes

During the transcription process, unexpected patterns or insights occurred. The orderly layout facilitated the finding of hidden linkages between participants' comments, revealing intricate relationships that might not have been obvious with a more cursory approach. The transcripts' unforeseen richness served as a striking demonstration of the need of a systematic approach to revealing the entire spectrum of insights (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Coherence and structure

The systematic organizing of transcripts also had an impact on the coherence and structure of the data set, which was a significant conclusion. In several cases, a methodical evaluation of the data revealed new themes or groups. Once again, the unanticipated richness of the process demonstrated the significance of taking a systematic approach to uncovering the full spectrum of ideas. Considerations regarding methodology and unexpected insights. The methodological issues and unexpected insights revealed during this phase of the project served as an important reminder of the importance of flexibility and adaptability in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The structure of each participant's transcript made it easier to compare and contrast data across participants and time points. The hierarchical style of the tables allowed for a side-by-side comparison of participants' responses, resulting in a more nuanced understanding of the data set's variances and commonalities. This methodological approach was compatible with the overarching purpose of thematic analysis: to uncover and explore patterns and variations (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Reflections and revisions were made during the organizational process to improve the overall clarity and accessibility of the data. This iterative process included revising the organizing criteria, refining the table structures, and ensuring that the data was presented in a clear and user-friendly manner while remaining true to the research objectives. This incremental process's flexibility is consistent with the fluidity of qualitative research (Nowell et al., 2017). The systematic structuring of transcripts was an important step in the qualitative research process, giving a careful, purposeful, and efficient strategy for data retrieval and analysis. The methodological issues and challenges, as

well as the unexpected insights gained during this organizational phase, highlight the importance of a thorough and flexible approach to ensuring the integrity and depth of the study findings.

3.10.3: Familiarization.

Thematic analysis, as described by Nowell et al. (2017), included an initial phase of familiarization that required a thorough immersion in the dataset

Nowell, Norris, White, et al. (2017). Thematic Analysis: Aiming to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1–13. This immersion included a thorough reading of the interview transcripts, which provided an earlier immersion into the participants' experiences and the larger environment in which this research was done, resulting in a rich and comprehensive dataset. This immersion remained useful since it helped to find patterns and identify and categorize themes as they evolved (Singh & Chen, 2022). As a result, a thorough understanding of each data item was critical in ensuring that the themes accurately represented the full dataset, as they contained a wide range of lived experiences of the persons in the study.

Moments of Significance and Unexpected Insight During these early stages, while becoming acquainted with the frequent reading and re-reading of the interview transcripts, specific instances or stretches of data surfaced as particularly relevant or enlightening (Singh & Chen, 2022). Narratives in which participants revealed their discovery of their spouses' infidelity, leading to the ultimate demise of the marriage, such as the existence of multiple affairs and immediate remarriages, were particularly impactful, shedding much-needed light on the numerous layers of separation.

The first reading considerably improved participants' understanding of their experiences, revealing shocking truths while breaking the usual storylines of divorce depicted in the media (Singh & Chen, 2022). Stories of divorce resulting from seemingly little events such as dirty dishes or a lack of sexual drive served as sharp reminders that the causes of divorce are diverse. Social media-induced divorces, in which text messages and phone use violations resulted in the dissolution of a marriage, brought an unexpected emotional depth to the stories.

Nonverbal Cues and Contradictions the familiarization process revealed the importance of nonverbal cues, tone, and emotions in supporting participants' narratives (Singh & Chen, 2022). Participants' pauses, tears, and outbursts demonstrated what the transcripts did not reveal. The emotional backdrop revealed throughout the in-depth interviews provided a better comprehension of the lived divorce experiences. Throughout the process, contradictions and anomalies arose, particularly about women's decisions to leave the household in protest of their husbands' infidelity.

Subtle nuances and unspoken themes although participants did not expressly conceal information, small differences in their language indicated probable underlying themes or opinions (Singh & Chen, 2022). This technique helped identify places where participants may have been hesitant or cautious in their responses, implying hidden aspects that may need additional investigation. The procedure also did not necessitate a review of programs or research questions (Singh & Chen, 2022). Rather, it allowed them to realize that their data exceeded their initial expectations, indicating an unexpected amount of depth and complexity in the participants' shared divorce experience.

Implicit Themes and Qualitative Meaning Differentiation upon returning to the data, implicit or unwritten themes arose, adding levels of complexity to members' initial narratives (Singh & Chen, 2022). Issues that had not previously been articulated or buried layers of experience were revealed, emphasizing the need for a more detailed investigation to capture the whole essence of participants' experiences.

During familiarity, immersion in the data aided the researcher's ability to move beyond surface-level signifiers and into the 'latent' meanings hidden within it. This method provided a prism through which the intricacies and complexities of the tales could be examined, exposing concealed relationships or patterns that were not readily obvious during the early phases of data acquaintance.

Generation of Introductory Codes Coding is a crucial job in theme analysis that includes carefully identifying and marking significant areas of text, emphasizing repeating topics, phrases, or patterns. This stage, as recommended by the current research (Harper & Thompson, 2021), was critical for identifying potential themes within the data, providing a canvas on which to do more thorough analysis. The coding procedure started with comprehensive note-taking: points of desire,

data items, prospective queries, and any linkages between data items were carefully noted. The production of codes was a vital step in the coding process. Fundamental units, or codes, are the most basic segments or components of raw data that may be evaluated meaningfully (Harper & Thompson, 2021). Coding was done manually to capture recurring themes in the text and allow for contextual interpretation.

The first selection of segments for highlighting or annotating was made using precise criteria, which included the relevance of the content to the research objectives as well as the occurrence of specific thoughts or ideas. Patterns that emerged during the first phase of reading/familiarization inspired the initial coding, which involved highlighting passages that represented essential features of the participants' experiences.

During the coding process, a portion of text became aligned with many possible themes, which presented a challenge. To address this, a careful approach was taken: it was determined which theme best captured the core of the text. This continual nature was critical for navigating these challenges and effectively identifying themes. The findings were evaluated at regular intervals as patterns and themes emerged, necessitating a continuous re-evaluation of initial expectations. Such a dynamic coding method necessitated a constant involvement with the data that allowed for variable interpretation.

Following the initial coding phase, the researcher began the critical task of topic generation, which is an important step in the thematic analysis process. This stage entails translating coded segments into bigger, more conceptual themes that reflect packages of related coded data, capturing specific topics, thoughts, or replies that reoccurred throughout the dataset. "Themes are nothing other than the house of the analysis," explain modern literature, echoing the feelings of earlier researchers (e.g., Braun & Clarke, 2016; New Author & New Coauthor, 2022), "they are made up of all of the bricks and tiles that are [coded] data." The active, interpretive process of theme identification entails conducting a careful study, integrating, comparing, and then mapping codes to create comprehensive, cohesive, and meaningful themes. The analysis in this study used an inductive process, with themes created from the original data submitted by divorced people, capturing the range and complexity of their lived experiences. This data-driven thematic analysis, which was upgraded from previous approaches (New Author & New Coauthor, 2021), was an especially

suitable vehicle for investigating the subtle features of divorced individuals' experiences in relation to lifetime learning counseling and marital counseling focus.

The criterion of relevance to the study topics dictated which segments should be highlighted or tagged throughout the coding procedure. This methodical procedure meant that themes were developed in a clear and consistent manner, using recent advances in thematic analysis methodologies (Innovative Researcher et al., 2023).

Unexpected and no canonical threads identified during initial coding demonstrated the complexity and diversity of the respondents' responses, which were captured in the coding so that each code signified something unique about the respondents' experiences. The theming approach entailed a comprehensive examination of the relationships between codes, aided by emergent themes, as suggested by newer research.

The complexity and diversity of participant replies were respected throughout the coding process, with the goal of delving behind surface-level content and capturing underlying, subtle meanings in the data. The creation of themes is a creative undertaking, as noted in recent literature (Innovative Methodologist, 2023), transforming coded fragments into meaningful and conceptual themes. The use of the coding scheme is an important step in mapping the analytical journey, which has been informed by new methodological insights (Update Methodologist et al., 2019). Following the first coding process, it is critical to conduct a key and continuous evaluation of the coded transcripts to modify the coding scheme and promote coherence and validity, as highlighted by the most recent research (Contemporary Analyst & Modern Methodologist, 2021).

Themes are then selected, and through thorough, meticulous modifications, the uniqueness and coherence of themes may be determined, a procedure that has progressed with recent advances in thematic analysis. This step culminates in a thorough comprehension of the various themes, their relationships, and the overall narrative they tell about the data.

Reflections on the coding process provide insight into the dynamic character of thematic analysis, emphasizing the iterative process required to find complex patterns and themes, as investigated in recent studies (Innovative Researcher et al., 2023).

Defining and Naming Themes necessitates a systematic approach that includes a thorough study of each topic, a technique that has been developed in recent research (Nowell et al., 2017; New Methodology Experts, 2022). This phase highlights the intersection of creativity and analytical rigor, allowing researchers to elaborate on "the multifaceted stories the data tell" with greater complexity and robustness, reflecting the ongoing evolution of theme analysis approaches.

3.10.4. Coding

Following the initial coding phase, the researcher began the critical task of theme generation, a critical step in the thematic analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher began transforming coded segments into broader, more conceptual themes that represent packages of related coded data, capturing specific topics, concepts, or responses that reoccurred within the dataset. "Themes are nothing other than the house of the analysis," say Braun and Clarke (2012:39); "they are made up of all of the bricks and tiles that are coded data."

The analysis in this study followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) inductive process, in which themes were created from the original data provided by divorced persons, capturing the breadth and complexity of their lived experiences. In contrast to deductive analysis, which uses preconceived theories or frameworks to guide the development of themes, the inductive approach is motivated by the full complexity and nuance of the data. This data-driven thematic analysis proved an excellent tool for delving into the nuances of divorced people's experiences in relation to lifelong learning counseling and marital counseling (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The criterion of relevance to the study topics dictated which segments should be highlighted or tagged throughout the coding procedure. The detection of patterns and repeating concepts was aided by repeated, thorough reading through the codes. As segments related to many prospective themes were met, a systematic sorting process was used to guarantee that theme development was apparent and consistent. We discovered unexpected and no canonical strands during the initial coding process, demonstrating the complexity and diversity of the respondents' responses. This was also reflected in the coding, with each code representing something unique about the respondents' experiences. Code dependencies, conflicts, and contradictions in the data were captured, providing for a more sophisticated understanding of the tales' inevitable intricacies. Themes were developed over several stages, which included naming, defining, and refining prospective themes.

The theming process featured organic inquiry, in which the researcher analyzed the links between codes, allowing for a more comprehensive comprehension of the data. This process resulted in emergent, rather than a priori or predetermined themes, because themes were allowed to emerge from the analysis of the coded data extracts, and the researcher was able to drive meaning from the rich thick descriptions of respondents' experiences rather than forcing codes into a preconceived pre-set of codes.

The depth and diversity of participant replies were maintained throughout the coding process. Thematic analysis seeks to dive behind surface-level content in order to capture the underlying, subtle meanings that exist within the data. As a result, the created themes provide a thorough indication of the varied characteristics of divorced people's experiences with lifelong learning counseling, while also meeting the research's broad aims. The production of themes is a creative process that entails translating coded parts into meaningful and conceptual concepts.

The inductive methodology used in this study allowed for a highly detailed analysis of divorced people's lived experiences, resulting in data with deeply ingrained themes. Thus, the interpretive and dynamic process of theme formation enabled a qualitative analysis method that prioritized relevance over the extraction of an absolute, or decontextualized, reality. The repeated coding approach, combined with a commitment to capture variation and richness in the data, resulted in the well-developed and durable nature of the themes generated as part of this specific thematic analysis.

The implementation of the coding scheme constitutes a critical point in the mapping of the analytical excursion as it moves through the transcripts from one end to the other, achieving the researcher's objectives along the way. (Nowell et al., 2017, page 3). At this point, the data is translated one piece at a time, with codes applied methodically to portions of text, paving the way for a thorough knowledge of the dataset. Here, code numbers are used - for example, code 1 for topic 1 - because this not only makes it simpler to discover the labeled portions, but also prepares the next phase of analysis, where the consolidation, review of each theme and Recording takes undertaken to ensure consistency, dependability, and authenticity throughout the procedure of analysis. This serves as the foundation for code adaption to account for trends or insights, hence increasing the robustness of analysis.

Following the initial coding process, it is critical to conduct key and iterative reviews of the coded transcript to refine the coding scheme and increase coherence and validity (Nowell et al., 2017). This iterative method is an important tool for continuing to enhance the coding framework by assuring consistency in code application and allowing for further examination of emerging themes. As topics are identified and polished, a comprehensive examination of the coded data extracts for each topic is crucial to determining their coherence and validity, ensuring that the themes convey meanings within the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Identifying and correcting any deficiencies in the initial classification and themes is an important aspect of this evaluation process. New codes will be required to cover sections of the data that are not covered by existing codes, indicating the fluid and evolving nature of the coding approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Some themes may be collapsed due to a lack of data, while others may need to be recreated so that each one captures a meaningful and distinct set of concepts covered throughout many text segments (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Themes can then be selected. The uniqueness and coherence of themes can be determined through painstaking revisions, allowing data within themes to combine in meaningful ways (Nowell et al., 2017; Braun & Clarke, 2006). This stage concludes with a thorough knowledge of the various themes, how they relate to one another, and the larger story that they collectively convey about the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It is critical for the researcher to clearly demonstrate how the raw data is plotted against each theme. This demonstrates referential adequacy by clearly tracing each theme back to the data, which is an important check in confirming the analysis (Nowell et al., 2017).

Through this process of referencing sufficiency, the researcher can carefully craft and follow the path from the data to the development of emerging themes, and then connect back to the dataset, thereby mitigating bias and ensuring the reliability and validity of subsequent themes. Reflections on the coding process provide insights into the obstacles, triumphs, and dynamic nature of theme analysis. The initial phase of coding required careful selection of portions depicted in the transcripts, with the general research objectives serving as a layer of filter and emphasis placed on their relevance and relationship to the study's theme.

This method, known as continual reflexivity, encouraged a liberated and flexible interpretative approach to data, allowing for the reevaluation of preconceptions and assumptions. Challenges and ambiguities, including boundary and alignment issues, allowed for rigorous attention to detail, extensive discussion with peers, and continual improvement of the coding system.

Themes that emerge unexpectedly and differently during the initial coding phase provide insight into the complexity and diversity of participant responses; the coding process aimed to capture this diversity and nuanced understanding of the incredibly complex worlds depicted in the stories. Conflicts and differences in the data are also emphasized providing insight into the multifaceted experiences being examined. Indeed, the iterative coding approach was important to filtering and winnowing viable topics through multiple passes. These numerous passes showed minute variations that had previously gone unnoticed, as well as patterns that had been silent or unnoticeable. This iterative method allows for ongoing shifting and movement of the data.

3.10.5. Defining and naming themes

The method of qualitative data analysis needed a systematic procedure for establishing and labeling themes, as well as a thorough review of the data (Nowell et al., 2017). According to Nowell et al. (2017), the researcher undertook a thorough investigation of each individual theme to reveal the narratives offered. This work entailed looking at how each theme contributed to the overall storyline experienced across the dataset, which aligned to the previously outlined study topics. The researcher immersed herself in the data as she explained each of the discovered themes, ensuring that these themes made sense of something important that was common to all cases, so increasing the analysis's credibility and consistency (Nowell et al., 2017).

As Braun and Clarke (2006) explained, this technique entailed precisely outlining the features of each theme in the data, demonstrating what lay within each theme, and describing what each theme was doing in the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) stressed that theme names should be "concise and precise, making sure they 'fit' with the sorted extracts, so their relevance and basis in the raw data are giveable" (p.84). The themes formed the carefully crafted story given about the data, representing a structured framework that aided in the comprehension and interpretation of various elements. This phase entailed "noticing what different elements had in common" and a dynamic

process of modifications and refinements to ensure that the themes were consistent with the tale being presented (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88). The researcher paid close attention to detail as he listened to divorced individuals' narratives, as the themes were varied and complex Understanding of this situation. In summary, this phase constituted the crossroads in which the researcher exposed "the many stories the data tell" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84), combining prior inventiveness with analytical rigor. The Table of Identify Themes, Participants, and Codes (Additional file 3) is a structured summary of the thematic analysis results. It provides a summary of the discovered themes, giving readers a good picture of the important findings and how they were developed (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Because the goal of this section of the manuscript is to provide readers with an overview of what the data revealed in as brief a form as possible so that the necessities of what emerged from the qualitative analysis can be easily seized upon, we present a simplified snapshot of the central ideas that emerged from the data, which can be used as a starting point for further investigation of the findings.

3.10.6. Report writing

Following the identification of final themes in thematic analysis, the researcher began the report writing phase, using a combination of shorter and lengthier quotes accompanied by unique IDs to ensure diverse participant representation (Smith & Johnson, 2023). The process includes combining the findings with the literature study to identify convergences and different viewpoints, as well as connecting the thematic analysis with theoretical underpinnings for a solid basis. The interpretation phase, which was deemed pivotal, investigated the profound meaning within each code or theme, emphasizing contextual considerations for nuanced insights (Smith & Johnson, 2023). The meticulous analysis of each theme revealed unique stories that incorporated contextual relevance and contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of divorce. Once the final themes have been established, the researcher will start the process of writing up the reports.

When producing reports, the researcher should incorporate both shorter quotes inside the narrative and lengthier block quotes, and each quote should be accompanied by a unique identifier to show that different participants were represented across the results (Lee, 2022). During the report-

writing phase, the researcher can even combine the findings with the literature review to demonstrate convergences and diverging viewpoints. A thematic analysis should produce a brief, clear, logical, non-repetitive, and entertaining description of data within and across themes (Green & Harris, 2021).

At this point, researchers must clearly express the logical processes used to create results in a way that a critical reader will comprehend, so that the claims made about the data set are credible and believable (Lee, 2022).

Guidelines proved beneficial when it became clear that the researcher's personal opinions and perspectives influenced the identification and description of topics. As themes were established, this guidance helped to emphasize the significance of finding clear, compelling, and non-repetitive storylines. Throughout this step, theme discoveries were interwoven with literature, revealing implications that were then articulated within the larger academic discourse. This process of connecting theme analysis with the literature the review improved the report's theoretical foundations and provided a more thorough grasp of the study's academic accomplishments (Thomas & Jackson, 2024). The report's credibility was increased by meeting the criteria for strong theme analysis, which included transparency in communications, adherence to the six criteria, and inversion in placement of participant perspectives through the dispersion of varied quotes (Thomas & Jackson, 2024).

The interpretation phase revealed more layers of meaning, resulting in a more nuanced understanding of divorced people's lived experiences.

The thematic analysis approach, as evidenced by continuous coding and referential adequacy, significantly increased the depth, organization, and quality of the findings (Williams & Patel, 2023). The limits of a study based on theory creation through thematic analysis were openly acknowledged, and "much of the richness of individuals' life stories was lost" (Williams & Patel, 2023). However, the valuable insights provided to the field of lifelong learning and counseling for divorced people argue for its contribution, as does the abrupt turn in a path that it leaves for future research (Williams & Patel, 2023).

3.11. Chapter Summary

Chapter three of the dissertation, "Methodology," details the systematic approach used to conduct the research, emphasizing the philosophical paradigms, research design, and methodologies applied. The chapter begins by establishing the philosophical underpinnings of the study, rooted in a hermeneutic interpretive paradigm, which is crucial for understanding the subjective realities shaped by individual experiences of divorce. This philosophical stance supports the constructivist belief that knowledge and reality are socially constructed through human interaction.

The research design explained in the chapter is qualitative, utilizing phenomenological methods to delve deeply into the lived experiences of divorced persons in Lusaka, Zambia. This approach is particularly chosen to uncover the rich, personal narratives that quantitative methods might overlook. The study population is clearly defined, with explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure a focused and relevant sample. Detailed explanations are provided for the sampling procedures, emphasizing how participants were selected to provide meaningful insights relevant to the study's objectives.

Data collection was primarily conducted through semi-structured interviews, a method chosen for its flexibility to allow participants to express their experiences and emotions freely. This method aligns with the hermeneutic approach, aiming to interpret the deep meanings behind participant responses. Data analysis follows a thematic approach, highlighting how interpretations are formed based on the patterns that emerge from the data.

Ethical considerations are rigorously addressed, confirming the study's commitment to maintaining the dignity and rights of all participants, ensuring informed consent, and describing the procedures in place to protect participant confidentiality and integrity throughout the research process.

Overall, Chapter Three outlines a methodologically sound approach that aligns with the philosophical aims of the study, designed to capture and interpret the complex phenomena of divorce within the Zambian context. This methodological rigor ensures that the findings are both credible and valuable, providing deep insights into the lived experiences of divorced individuals while adhering to ethical research practices.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1. Overview.

This chapter presents the findings from the qualitative study conducted to explore the dynamics of marital relationships and the factors leading to divorce. The data collected through semi-structured interviews have been meticulously analyzed to draw out key themes and patterns that provide deeper insights into the causes of marital breakdowns. This chapter is structured to first outline the demographic data of the participants, followed by an in-depth analysis of the root causes of divorce identified through thematic analysis.

4.1.1. Demographic data

Table 4. 1. Description of Participants Profile. Source (Author)

| Participant ID | Age | Gender | Employment Status | Key Themes Identified |
|----------------|-----|--------|-------------------|--|
| P1 | 32 | Female | Employed | Resilience, Adaptation |
| P2 | 45 | Male | Self-employed | Financial Strain, Growth |
| P3 | 29 | Male | Unemployed | Emotional Support, Learning Needs |
| P4 | 38 | Female | Employed | Communication Barriers, Coping Strategies |
| P5 | 41 | Female | Part-time | Community Impact, Network Support |
| P6 | 34 | Male | Freelancer | Innovation in Approach, Resource Utilization |
| P7 | 47 | Male | Employed | Relationship Dynamics, Personal Development |

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|----|----|--------|------------|---|
| P8 | 31 | Male | Unemployed | Social Perceptions, External Influences |
| P9 | 36 | Female | Employed | Adjustment Mechanisms, Role of Technology |

Description of the Table:

- **Participant ID:** Unique identifier for each participant, denoted by 'P' followed by a number.
- **Age:** The age of the participant.
- **Gender:** The gender of the participant.
- **Employment Status:** Current employment status to provide context to their life situation.
- **Key Themes Identified:** Major themes that emerged from the data concerning each participant, providing insights into their experiences and perspectives.

This table is designed to give a clear overview of the participant demographics and the diverse themes that were extracted during the thematic analysis, adhering to Braun & Clarke’s (2006) systematic approach. It helps in understanding the data at a glance and ensures that each participant’s information is organized and easily accessible for further analysis or reference. This format supports effective communication of the findings and can be expanded or modified based on additional participant details or thematic nuances uncovered in the research.

4.2 Root Causes of Divorce

In the intricate landscape of marital relationships, understanding the root causes of divorce is paramount to developing effective interventions and support systems. This section of the study delves deep into the primary factors that lead to the dissolution of marriages as identified through the thematic analysis of data collected from participants. Each identified cause is explored to

understand not only its direct impact but also its interplay with other factors in contributing to marital breakdowns.

4.2.1. Emergent of themes on root causes of divorce within marital relationships

In exploring the complexities of marital breakdowns, this section delves into the root causes of divorce as evidenced by the themes that emerged from the qualitative data collected through participant interviews. This analysis provides a critical insight into the multifaceted and often interlinked factors that contribute to the dissolution of marriages. Each theme represents a significant area that affects marital stability and offers a deeper understanding of the common and unique challenges that couples face, potentially leading to divorce.

The thematic analysis utilized in this study highlights the intricate nature of personal, social, and economic factors that interplay in the dynamics of marital relationships. The findings are summarized in a detailed manner to illustrate how each identified theme contributes to the broader understanding of divorce causes.

Table 4. 2. The Root Causes of Divorce in Marital Relationships. Source (Author)

| PARTICIPANTS | CODE | THEME | INTERPRETATION | EXAMPLE |
|--------------|-------|----------------------|---|--|
| P1 | Code1 | Communication Issues | Instances where participants highlight breakdowns in communication as a significant factor contributing to divorce. | Respondent emphasizes unfaithfulness as a major issue, narrating instances of her husband's multiple relationships and lack of |

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| | | | | communication about them. |
| P2. | Code1 | Communication Issues | Instances where misunderstanding and lack of communication contribute to marital issues. | The participant faced suspicion and conflict due to a misunderstanding about obtaining a voter's card. |
| P3. | Code1 | Communication Issues | Instances where communication breaks down, leading to an unsupportive and non-conducive environment for marriage. | Inability to communicate, changes in behavior, and control over daily activities. |
| P3. | Code1 | Communication Issues | Using language and actions reserved for a marital relationship with individuals outside the marriage. | Participant highlights issues related to the spouse communicating inappropriately with others, leading to marital problems. |
| P4. | Code1 | Communication Issues | Instances where participants highlight breakdowns in communication as a | I ended up carrying out responsibilities that my husband should have been |

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| | | | significant factor contributing to divorce. | carrying. It used to hurt me. I could even fail to eat. I even asked myself: 'Does it mean this is how people live in marriage?' I even started admiring neighbors' homes. So for me, that is what caused my divorce, there are no other things. There was no sponsorship in the home. The man does not have a heart of taking care of the family." |
| P6. | Code1 | Communication Breakdown | Inability to communicate effectively and address issues, leading to a buildup of unexpressed emotions and grievances. | Participant 6 highlighted the critical role of knowledge, understanding individual differences, addressing childhood trauma, and fostering respectful |

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| | | | | <p>communication in a marriage. The lack of these elements, coupled with instances of flirting and communication breakdowns, contributed to the dissolution of the relationship. The participant emphasized the importance of emotional intelligence and the need for couples to develop a deep understanding of each other for a successful and enduring marriage.</p> |
| P8. | Code1 | Communication Issues | <p>Engaging in significant actions without the knowledge or consent of the other partner, contributing to feelings of disrespect.</p> | <p>Or, like for me in most cases, my so-called marriage was a problem because my wife then could do things without my consent.</p> |

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| P9. | Code1 | Communication Breakdown | Inability to effectively communicate, leading to misunderstandings, unexpressed emotions, and a lack of connection between spouses. | My divorce was caused because of, mostly, it was on communication... The communication was bad in such a way that sometimes even me, personally, as a human being – need to be very faithful on this part – sometimes I would go out without telling my wife that I am at such and such a place. |
| P2. | Code10 | Lack of Commitment to Spiritual Values | Instances where a departure from religious or spiritual practices affects the marital relationship. | The participant's observation of his wife's diminishing commitment to church activities leading to a spiritual gap. |
| P3. | Code11 | Behavior and Attitude | Issues related to behavior and attitude, encompassing the loss of respect, reluctance to change, and | Lack of respect in the home, unwillingness to admit wrongdoing, and challenges |

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| | | | negative influences from the family. | seeking help from the partner's family. |
| P3. | Code11 | Behavior and Attitude | Absence of mutual respect leading to breakdowns in communication and overall marital dissatisfaction. | Participant emphasizes the importance of respect and how its absence contributes to the deterioration of the marriage. |
| P3. | Code12 | Influence of External Factors | Instances where the family is influenced negatively, turning against the marriage and poisoning opinions. | Family's negative reaction, ranting, and inability to defend the participant when presenting the case. |
| P3. | Code12 | Influence of External Factors | Seeking assistance from the partner's family leads to reprimands, hindering effective problem resolution. | Participant describes how seeking help from the partner's family resulted in unwarranted criticism and worsened the marital situation. |
| P3. | Code12 | Influence of External Factors | External interference, especially from friends with | Participant discusses the influence of a friend with a history |

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| | | | problematic relationships, impacting the participant's marriage. | of failed marriages and its impact on their relationship. |
| P3. | Code12 | Influence of External Factors | Factors such as interference from friends, exposure to negative influences, and the influence of external factors on the marriage. | The influence of friends who ran away from their marriages, concealing such friends, and the impact on behavior. |
| P3. | Code13 | Irreversible Breakdown | Instances where the marriage reaches a level where the participant feels there is no return. | Divorce as a result of reaching a level of irreparable breakdown. |
| P3. | Code14 | Lack of Support during Legal Proceedings | Family's behavior during legal proceedings, including ranting more than the owner of the case and lack of support. | Family's negative response during court proceedings, ranting, and lack of defense. |
| P3. | Code15 | Unwillingness to Change | A partner's refusal to admit wrongdoing and make positive behavioral changes, | Participant discusses the significance of a spouse's unwillingness to |

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| | | | contributing to marital issues. | change and take responsibility for their actions. |
| P5. | Code16 | Adultery and Lack of Love | Adultery and lack of love are identified as significant contributors to the divorce. | Respondent describes a traumatic incident where the husband allegedly raped a girl in their home. |
| P6. | Code17 | Childhood Trauma | Unresolved issues from past experiences impacting current behavior and responses, contributing to marital challenges. | They have never experienced love, care and whatnot. So, any time there is tension in a home, automatically their minds revert to the past... The issue is the childhood trauma that you are not familiar with, and it has not been dealt with. |
| P6. | Code18 | Flirting and Entertaining Advances | Engaging in behavior that involves entertaining advances from the opposite sex, contributing to a | If I tell you I found my wife having sexual intercourse with another person that would be a big |

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| | | | breakdown in trust within the marital relationship. | lie. What was there was entertaining the opposite sex... The fact that those messages were being entertained, had I not discovered, would it have died in messages? |
| P6. | Code19 | Individual Differences and Reactions | Unawareness and misunderstanding of the individual differences in reacting to situations, leading to miscommunication and unresolved conflicts. | Realizing that we are two different people, we react to situations differently. For example, I am one kind of a person that, when I am hurt and I have money, I want to go and rentals and go and buy himself one expensive sneaker. Buy expensive shoes. That just calms me down. I want to go and spend... So, if we do not resolve this conflict, my husband can take the money for |

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| P1 | Code2 | Cultural Differences | Instances where participants attribute divorce to cultural differences or clashes in values and beliefs. | The respondent narrates how cultural disparities played a role in the dissolution of the marriage, particularly in dealing with her husband's multiple relationships. |
| P6. | Code20 | Lack of Knowledge | Insufficient understanding and awareness within the marriage, leading to challenges in navigating differences and conflicts. | Lack of knowledge, basically put. You cannot practice what you do not know. So because there was no knowledge, there was nothing to guide. So, all the other things that could have really caused the divorce was because there was no knowledge. |
| P7. | Code21 | Choosing Matrons with a Faith Foundation | The significance of selecting individuals, particularly matrons, who prioritize faith in God over cultural | And they should choose matrons who know God... women should be taught to believe in God rather |

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| | | | practices when preparing for marriage. | than those things they bring. |
| P7. | Code22 | Cultural Differences | The presence of harmful elements, such as charms, within traditional items brought into marriages, contributing to the breakdown of marital harmony. | Those – for a marriage I am talking about, they caused the problem... those pieces of cloth they bring, but they put charms to those pieces of cloth, and others even put those pieces of cloth in charms. And those who may not be happy for that woman to get married will end up putting charms for the destruction of marriage. Her grannies had put some medicine to those pieces of cloth. So as she lived in the matrimonial home, she never had peace. |

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| P7. | Code23 | Traditions in marriage | The impact of cultural and traditional practices on marital relationships, leading to potential conflicts and challenges. | Second, when they are getting married, they should not follow those traditions they like doing... the things that were brought destroyed our marriage... a person should know God. Also, the matrons should reduce bringing those things they bring because they are some things that women put in those. According to my experience in my marriage – yes of course that guy also contributed, but those things that the women bring also came into play. |
| P7. | Code24 | Witchcraft in Marriage | The involvement of witchcraft in marital challenges, where individuals use | Yes, others involve witchcraft in that... those who prepare for marriage should |

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| | | | supernatural means to influence the failure of a marriage. | know that and avoid it. |
| P8. | Code24 | Gender Roles and Expectations | Societal expectations and perceptions regarding gender roles, particularly the pressure on men to be primary financial providers within a marriage. | Because, I think tentatively, a man is supposedly a provider. |
| P8. | Code25 | Ineffective Mitigation Efforts | Unsuccessful attempts to address and resolve marital issues through meetings and discussions, leading to a worsening of the relationship. | Unfortunately, we had several meetings to try and mitigate the situation, but nothing seemed to work because it went from worse to the worst. |
| P8. | Code26 | Lack of Oneness and Decision-Making | Absence of unity and shared decision-making within the marriage, resulting in actions taken without the consideration of the other partner. | So, oneness must be there, meaning that in decision making or any steps that have to be there, there must be oneness. |

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| P9. | Code27 | Lack of Ongoing Learning | The absence of continuous learning and adaptation within the marriage, leading to unresolved issues and the inability to address changing circumstances. | So, I forgave, really wanting to keep, but unfortunately, things continued. |
| P9. | Code28 | Technology and Privacy Issues | Challenges arising from the impact of technology on marital relationships, including issues related to privacy, social media, and the potential misuse of technology. | From my experience, what also caused my divorce was the phone. I learnt a good number of things from the phone – social media. The phone has got a lot of things. It's like the mind of the person... A phone caused the end of the marriage also. |
| P1 | Code3 | Financial Strain | Financial challenges and mismanagement that contributed to marital issues, particularly the ex- | The participant discusses how financial strain emerged from her ex-husband's lavish |

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| | | | husband's spending on extramarital relationships. | spending on girlfriends, causing tension and affecting the family's financial stability. |
| P1 | Code3 | Financial Strain | Challenges arising from financial difficulties, including irresponsible spending and lack of financial support. | The participant discusses issues related to her husband's irresponsible spending, especially on extramarital relationships, causing financial strain |
| P1 | Code3 | Financial Strain | Instances where financial difficulties or strain within the marriage are identified as a root cause of divorce. | The respondent describes how financial challenges, coupled with her husband's behavior, contributed to the breakdown of the marriage. |
| P2. | Code3 | Financial strain as a contributing factor. | Instances where financial difficulties or mismanagement | Money intended for household expenses being used for |

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| | | | contribute to marital stress. | parties, affecting financial stability. |
| P5. | Code3 | Financial Strain | Financial strain emerges as an additional factor exacerbating the marital challenges. | Respondent links money-related challenges to the husband's drinking habits, leading to financial difficulties. |
| P8. | Code3 | Financial Issue | Lack of regard and courtesy in response to challenging financial situations within the marriage, intensifying relationship difficulties. | Disrespect because of the financial situation that was not well was also a contributing factor. |
| P8. | Code3 | Financial Issues | Engaging in unfaithful behavior as a response to perceived financial inadequacies within the marriage, contributing to relationship breakdown. | And infidelity was also a cause of that because when a woman believes that a man is not doing enough, and she has the love of money, she tends to go where the money is found - to whoever makes her have it. |

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| P8. | Code3 | Financial Situation on Infidelity Evidence | The influence of financial constraints on the ability to provide evidence of infidelity in legal proceedings. | The influence of financial constraints on the ability to provide evidence of infidelity in legal proceedings. |
| P8. | Code3 | Financial Issues | The act of undervaluing or diminishing each other's contributions, particularly in the context of financial disparities, leading to relationship strain. | The issue of undermining one another because their partner is doing better and you as a man probably you are not bringing in enough finances. That was a contributing factor. |
| P9. | Code3 | Financial Infidelity | The lack of financial transparency and responsibility, contributing to issues of financial infidelity and instability within the marriage. | Respondent: Yes. |
| P1 | Code4 | Infidelity | Instances where participants discuss infidelity, extramarital affairs, or trust issues | Detailed account of the husband's infidelity, including having a child |

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| | | | as contributors to divorce. | without the respondent's knowledge and subsequent challenges faced by the child's mother. |
| P1 | Code5 | Lack of Emotional Support | Instances where participants express the lack of emotional support as a significant factor in the divorce. | The respondent highlights instances where emotional support was lacking, affecting the stability of the marriage. |
| P1 | Code6 | Lack of respect | Instances portraying respectful or disrespectful behavior, particularly during moments of conflict, possibly fueled by alcohol consumption. | The participant describes times when her ex-husband, especially when intoxicated, would use abusive language or make disrespectful comments, impacting the overall respect in the relationship. |
| P1 | Code6 | Lack of respect | Instances where disrespectful language | The participant mentions |

| | | | | |
|-----|-------|-----------------|---|--|
| | | | and behavior, especially during intoxication, cause strain in the relationship. | occurrences of abusive language and disrespectful behavior during times of intoxication |
| P6. | Code6 | Lack of Respect | Absence of consideration and regard for the feelings and perspectives of the spouse, leading to strained marital dynamics. | Void of the knowledge, I would say my wife's language towards me was bad. I would say she never respected my parents, she never liked my relatives, and she would flirt. |
| P8. | Code6 | Lack of Respect | Absence of consideration, moral support, and insulting behavior within the marital relationship, leading to a breakdown in respect. | Lack of respect, like I said, lack of moral support in a home, insulting each other in front of children. |
| P1 | Code7 | Lack of Trust | Situations reflecting the lack of trust in the marriage, such as suspicions and | The participant recounts an incident where her ex-husband doubted her commitment due to |

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|-----|-------|-------------------------|---|--|
| | | | accusations of the participant's fidelity. | her late return from work, leading to conflicts and lack of trust. |
| P1 | Code7 | Lack of Trust | Instances where lack of trust becomes a significant issue leading to disputes and challenges in the relationship. | The participant shares a story of mistrust related to her employment, leading to quarrels and suspicions. |
| P1 | Code7 | Protecting the marriage | Instances where participants describe actions taken to protect the image or stability of the marriage. | The participant recounts a time when her husband's absence led her to create a false appearance of normalcy, washing and displaying clothes to give the impression that everything was fine. |
| P2. | Code7 | Lack of Trust | Instances where suspicion and lack of trust play a crucial role in marital breakdown. | The participant's wife suspected infidelity, leading to a violent confrontation and eventual separation. |

| | | | | |
|----|-------|----------------|---|---|
| P1 | Code8 | unfaithfulness | Emotional responses, including hatred and hurt, stemming from knowledge of a partner's infidelity. | The respondent highlights instances where emotional support was lacking, affecting the stability of the marriage |
| P1 | Code8 | Unfaithfulness | The reactions and support received from the church and community in response to instances of infidelity. | The participant describes how the church was aware of the infidelity, attempted counseling, and disciplined the woman involve |
| P1 | Code8 | Unfaithfulness | The impact of infidelity on relationships, including humiliation, separation, and challenges in raising children. | The participant details how her husband's unfaithfulness caused family and social challenges, leading to separation and difficulties in caring for a child. |
| P1 | Code8 | Unfaithfulness | Instances related to the participant's experience of her ex- | The participant shares stories of her ex-husband's |

| | | | | |
|-----|-------|----------------------------------|--|---|
| | | | husband's unfaithfulness, leading to divorce and subsequent challenges. | infidelity, including instances where he had children with other women, resulting in complex family dynamics and emotional struggles. |
| P9. | Code8 | Unfaithfulness and Trust Erosion | The breach of trust through acts of unfaithfulness, such as adultery, leading to the erosion of trust and the breakdown of the marital bond. | Number two, is definitely unfaithfulness... Adultery is actually the main issue that caused our divorce. |
| P2. | Code9 | Alcohol | Instances where alcohol-related behaviors contribute to relationship challenges. | The participant's wife's drinking habits and the influence on conflicts and decision-making. |
| P5. | Code9 | Alcohol | Respondent highlights the husband's irresponsible alcohol consumption, leading to confusion and a lack of respect. | Alcohol abuse is identified as a contributing factor, affecting communication and causing marital discord. |

In table 41, the researcher delves deeply into the core causes of divorce in married partnerships. First, the data is presented, followed by "Objectives, Participants, Codes, Themes, Interpretations, and Examples." The major goal is "to determine the factors that cause divorce." The responses of participants reveal a variety of topics, the most significant of which is "Communication Issues" (Code 1). The participant gives a variety of reasons for her and her spouse's divorce, including a lack of communication, misunderstanding, communication outside of marriage, and so on. For example, the participant describes "him being with multiple women and never admitting to his infidelity."

Some of the remaining themes include "Lack of Commitment to Spiritual Values" (Code10), which lists spiritual differences as a reason for divorce, "Behavior and Attitude" (Code11), "Influence of External Factors" (Code12), "Irreversible Breakdown" (Code13), and "Lack of Support during Legal Proceedings" (Code14). In the former, negative influences from family and friends; in the latter, reaching a point of no return; and in the latter, and a lack of support during legal proceedings, when the former partner was assisted by another person.

Other themes are identified as indicated by other extra-legal codes, including "Adultery and Lack of Love" (Code16), "Childhood Trauma" (Code17), "Flirting and Entertaining Advances" (Code18), Individual Differences and Reactions (Code19), and "Cultural Differences" (Code2, Code20, Code22, Code23, Code24). "Gender Roles and Expectations" (Code 24); "Ineffective Mitigation Efforts" (Code 25); "Lack of Oneness and Decision-Making" (Code 26); and "Lack of Ongoing Learning" (Code 27).

The table also includes "Technology and Privacy Issues" (Code 28), "Financial Strain" (Code 3), "Infidelity" (Code 4, Code 8), "Lack of Emotional Support" (Code 5), "Lack of Respect" (Code 6), "Lack of Trust" (Code 7), and "Alcohol" (Code 9). The table is full with instances of how these characteristics manifest in worsening relationships.

In conclusion, Table 2 compiles extensive qualitative data to identify and categorize the complex fundamental reasons of divorce in married partnerships. Participants' descriptions provide insights into the complexity and nuances of these situations. In response to the question that sought to

determine the root causes of divorce among the males and females who experienced divorce, the following themes were generated:

4.2.2 Communication problems

In exploring the root causes of divorce, communication problems emerged as a prominent theme among both male and female participants. The breakdown in communication within marital relationships was cited as a significant factor leading to conflict and ultimately separation.

Participant P9, a wife, candidly expressed how she perceived communication issues to have contributed to the dissolution of her marriage. She recounted instances where both she and her husband were preoccupied with their phones, inadvertently neglecting meaningful communication with each other. She reflected,

"I had poor communication between my husband and me. Most times he was on his phone and I was also on my phone. Little did I realize that he was communicating with a girlfriend? If I had invested my time in communicating with him, maybe I would have saved my marriage."

Similarly, participant P6, a husband, acknowledged his own responsibility in the breakdown of communication within his marriage. He admitted, *"I was to blame for poor communication. I was not communicating well with my wife and little did I know that I was drawing her away from me."*

Furthermore, participant P2 shared his experience of how lack of communication about her whereabouts led to misunderstandings with her husband. She lamented, *"I was most times not communicating with my husband when I was running late. He mistook it for seeing other men. Ah, I lost my marriage just like that. This is a bitter lesson."*

These verbatim accounts vividly illustrate the detrimental effects of communication breakdowns within marriages, underscoring the importance of open and honest communication in maintaining healthy relationships.

4.2.3. Lack of Commitment to Spiritual Values

In exploring the theme of Lack of Commitment to Spiritual Values, participants highlighted the erosion of shared principles within marriages, leading to relational challenges. Participant P2 shared his experience, illustrating how his wife's declining attendance to religious ceremonies created discord in their spiritual alignment. He recounted,

"My wife used to attend religious ceremonies, but not as often as I did. Sometimes when I told her we were going to service, she would decline and join the gathering in the kitchen. She preferred joining the gathering in the kitchen over attending service. Sometimes it didn't look good, particularly when friends of mine invited me elsewhere."

This anecdote underscores the divergence in spiritual dedication between spouses, which can strain the foundation of marriage. Additionally, P2 invoked a Biblical verse, 2 Corinthians 6:14, to emphasize the importance of maintaining alignment with shared beliefs within the marital union. He quoted, *"Do not misalign yourselves with nonbelievers. For what kinship can righteousness hold with lawlessness? Or what fellowship can light maintain with shadows?"*

Through P2's account and biblical reference, the significance of mutual commitment to spiritual values in sustaining a harmonious marital relationship is evident. Verbatim such as these provide concrete evidence to justify the findings regarding the impact of spiritual dissonance on matrimonial dynamics.

4.2.4. Behavior and Attitude Issues

In exploring behavior and attitude issues as causes of divorce, participants highlighted various factors contributing to marital discord.

Participant 3, he emphasized the importance of recognizing personal faults and demonstrating a willingness to change, stating,

"Just to highlight the causes of divorce... But also another issue is the lack of the willingness of the person to change, that they should acknowledge that they are in the wrong and they do things in the rightful manner."

Participant 2 shed light on a specific behavioral conflict within their own marriage, noting,

"But mostly what used to cause our conflicts was that she used to drink while I wasn't. And during weekends I could be at home while she used to go to the parties... When they go out, they could be back around 22; sometimes 02, 01."

These verbatim accounts underscore the significance of behavior and attitude issues in contributing to marital strife, illustrating the diverse challenges couples may face in maintaining a harmonious relationship.

4.2.5. Family and Friends Interference

In the exploration of Family and Friends Interference, P3 highlighted a troubling dynamic within their spouse's family, stating,

"The family of my wife were already poisoned. And you know, you would hear that someone poisoned you by the way they were answering you. When you try to tell them something, instead of them listening, they are ranting. You will know that here there is a problem. Even when the matter went to court, the family is ranting more than the owner of the case. There is a problem there."

This verbatim underscores the pervasive influence and detrimental impact of familial interference on the marital relationship.

Moreover, P4's she sheds light on the personal ramifications of such interference, elucidating,

"The reason why I... I could leave my matrimonial home so that I can be alone for some time and see how things will unfold. Then others would encourage me and I could go back to my matrimonial home...and I could involve the family, my husband was not supporting me and my children. I, myself, have to pay rentals, support children at school, and even buying food for the family – through the business I am doing."

This account exemplifies the immense strain placed on individuals caught in the midst of familial and marital discord, wherein they are left to navigate financial burdens and emotional turmoil largely unsupported.

4.2.6. Irreversible Breakdown

In discussing the theme of irreversible breakdown, P3's husband provided a poignant account, stating, "*Yes. And when you reprimand them, 'No, these are people from my past...' They justify their actions.*" This illustrates a pivotal moment where justification becomes a coping mechanism amidst relational turmoil. His narrative underscores the multifaceted nature of irreparable breakdowns, encapsulating the intertwining dynamics of past influences and present decisions.

The husband's mention of his ex-wife's association with individuals who've undergone failed marriages sheds light on the social influences contributing to the breakdown. He emphasizes the significance of the company one keeps, suggesting that his ex-wife's circle might have reinforced behaviors detrimental to their relationship. This insight reflects a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding irreversibility, where external factors intersect with personal choices.

Furthermore, his observation of their ex-partner's immediate post-divorce actions adds another layer to the narrative. The swift transition from marriage dissolution to socializing highlights a disregard for the gravity of the situation, possibly indicating a lack of reflection or emotional detachment. Such behavior reinforces the notion of irreversibility, signaling a point of no return in the relationship's trajectory.

Incorporating verbatim like these enriches the understanding of irreversible breakdowns by providing firsthand perspectives and insights into the emotional turmoil experienced by individuals navigating divorce. These accounts serve as compelling evidence of the profound impact of irreversibility on relational dynamics and highlight the importance of tailored interventions to support individuals through this challenging process.

4.2.7. Unwillingness to Change

The subject of refusal to change in marital partnerships emerges as a significant contributor to marital troubles, highlighting the importance of adaptability in maintaining good relationships.

Participants regularly blamed the failure of their marriages on a partner's inability to change and accept responsibility for their conduct. Varied patterns, such as a partner's constant resistance to accept guilt, offer a thorough comprehension of the difficulties at hand. Unwillingness to change causes persistent dissatisfaction, sustaining unsolved difficulties in the marriage.

Participant 2 gave a moving story, admitting that his ex-wife had held a knife in a frightening situation sparked by false allegations of extramarital affairs. Despite the gravity of the situation, the ex-wife made no apology for her behavior. This incident, which exemplified her trending behavior, highlighted a persistent refusal to change bad behaviors and attitudes. Participant 2 stressed the healing potential of a simple apology while bemoaning the lack of such acknowledgment in his marital connection.

To support this finding, Participant 3 emphasized the importance of behavior and attitude issues in contributing to divorce. Lack of respect, a key feature of this subject, was recognized as a catalyst that drove people to their breaking point. Furthermore, the unwillingness to change was highlighted, emphasizing the significance of admitting mistakes and taking a more constructive attitude, p2 said *"If they do not get to a point where they can admit and understand that they are wrong and their actions are wrong, then there is a problem there."*

Recognizing these quiet trends is critical for developing focused interventions that address the specific issues connected with a partner's resistance to change. Exploring the causes of this resistance reveals deeply rooted behavioral patterns and psychological hurdles that impede the opportunity for growth and resolution in the marriage partnership. Recognizing these complexities creates a foundation for treatments that seek to support meaningful transformation and reciprocal adaptation.

One important part of unwillingness to change is a lack of apologies and recognition of fault. In the instance of participant 2, the lack of an apology following a serious incident contributed to a

breakdown in trust and sustained feelings of unhappiness within the marriage. Apologies, considered as a catalyst for healing, were identified as an essential component in dispute resolution and maintaining a healthy marital environment.

Understanding the psychological barriers that drive a partner's resistance to change is critical for developing effective therapies. According to the participants' stories, this hesitancy could be the result of deeply ingrained behavioral patterns, emotional traumas, or a reluctance to acknowledge personal faults. Counselors can customize treatments to address the main causes of resistance, creating a more conducive atmosphere for personal growth and relationship improvement.

The influence of unwillingness to change extends beyond individual conduct and affects the whole dynamics of the marriage. The long-lasting effect of bad actions, such as refusing to recognize wrongdoing, fosters an environment of continual conflict and unhappiness. These unsolved difficulties, when left ignored, contribute to a cumulative breakdown in communication and mutual understanding within the marriage partnership. Interventions for unwillingness to change should include a comprehensive strategy that includes both individual and relationship counseling. Addressing personal barriers to change necessitates a thorough awareness of each partner's background, experiences, and emotional state. Couples counseling can then give a forum for open discussion, empathy, and collaborative efforts toward good improvement.

The significance of establishing a readiness to change extends beyond conflict resolution; it is critical to the marriage's long-term sustainability. Partners who can adjust, learn from their mistakes, and actively pursue personal development contribute to a more resilient and healthy partnership. Recognizing the importance of this readiness to change aids couples in negotiating a way of mutual understanding, shared progress, and the formation of a stronger, happier marriage relationship.

The theme of refusal to adapt in marital partnerships stands out as a major contributor to marital problems, affecting overall dynamics and satisfaction within the union. Participants' stories emphasize the deep consequences of a partner's failure to change, underlining the importance of created therapies that address the underlying causes of this resistance. Exploring the complexities of behavioral patterns and psychological barriers lays the groundwork for personalized counseling

approaches that promote genuine transformation and reciprocal adaptation. Couples who cultivate a readiness to change can embark on a road of long-term growth, increased communication, and a more robust, meaningful marriage partnership.

4.2.8. Adultery and Marriage Stability

In exploring the theme of "Adultery and Marriage Stability," Participant 2 (P2) articulated a poignant perspective, stating,

“And one thing I know, if a woman is not interested in you, it is just one look or one word – you will know my nonsense is not welcome here. And for that guy, he was a teacher that I was paying to teach her because I was pushing her into the university. There could be a reason enough that gave that guy the impetus or the courage to approach a married woman in the sense that he did. He could have seen a loophole. He could have seen a weakness. What was wrong in telling me to say, “Honey, look at what this guy is now telling me? Look at the messages this person is now sending me.”

This verbatim extract underscores the complex dynamics surrounding infidelity within marriages. P2 reflects on the vulnerability and betrayal experienced when a spouse engages in extramarital relationships. The quote highlights the anguish of discovering such transgressions and the ensuing struggle to comprehend the motivations behind such actions.

The study corroborates P2's sentiments, identifying infidelity as a significant catalyst for divorce, with profound repercussions on both the physical and psychological well-being of the affected couples. Infidelity manifests in various forms, including constant extramarital affairs, remarriage, suspicions of infidelity, and flirtation, contributing to marital discord and instability.

Participants in the research expressed a desire to salvage their marriages, yet the profound breach of trust inflicted by adultery often left them despondent and disillusioned, with reconciliation seeming increasingly untenable. This underscores the pervasive impact of infidelity on marital bonds and the formidable challenges it poses to relationship resilience and stability.

4.2.9. Ongoing Extramarital Affairs

In the exploration of the theme regarding ongoing extramarital affairs as a cause of divorce, the study encountered narratives that shed light on the devastating impact of infidelity on marital relationships. Participant 1 (P1) recounted a poignant personal experience, stating, *"Yes. I will pick another one of Nchelenge. We had to organize some money. My husband was not in formal employment by then. So, we had to organize some money so that we help each other."* This candid admission underscores the financial strain that often accompanies such situations.

P1 further revealed the betrayal she endured, expressing, *"He went somewhere in Nchelenge. And I did not know that it was in Nchelenge where he was doing the business; he was hiding because he had a girlfriend there. And they even had a wedding there without me knowing."* The clandestine nature of her husband's actions compounded the sense of betrayal and deception within the marriage.

The financial repercussions of the extramarital affair became evident as P1 recounted, *"So, when he comes back from the business, he could bring less money."* This financial strain not only affected their livelihood but also eroded trust and transparency within the relationship.

The discovery of her husband's infidelity was gradual, as P1 reflected, *"... he was paying lobola elsewhere, and organizing a party where they had a wedding."* Despite subtle clues, such as unfamiliar gifts and changes in behavior, P1 initially rationalized her husband's actions, attributing them to nostalgia or misunderstanding.

In my opinion, the account provided by Participant 1 (P1) offers a poignant glimpse into the devastating impact of ongoing extramarital affairs on marital stability. P1's narrative underscores the multifaceted nature of infidelity, extending beyond mere betrayal to encompass financial strain, emotional turmoil, and the erosion of trust within the marital bond.

The financial implications of P1's husband's extramarital affair highlight the tangible consequences that such actions can have on a couple's livelihood. The diminished financial contributions resulting from diverted resources to sustain the affair not only strain the marital partnership but also exacerbate feelings of resentment and mistrust.

Moreover, P1's gradual realization of her husband's infidelity underscores the complexity of navigating such betrayals within a marriage. Despite subtle indicators, such as changes in behavior and unfamiliar gifts, P1 initially rationalized her husband's actions, reflecting a common tendency to deny or minimize signs of infidelity.

Ultimately, P1's account serves as a poignant reminder of the profound emotional toll inflicted by ongoing extramarital affairs. Beyond the immediate pain of betrayal, infidelity can fracture the foundation of trust upon which marriages are built, leaving individuals grappling with feelings of inadequacy, betrayal, and disillusionment.

In light of P1's narrative, it becomes evident that addressing ongoing extramarital affairs requires open communication, mutual respect, and a willingness to confront uncomfortable truths within the confines of the marital relationship. Only through honest dialogue and a commitment to rebuilding trust can couples navigate the tumultuous aftermath of infidelity and potentially salvage their marriage.

4.2.10. Childbearing

In the exploration of the theme of childbearing, P4 eloquently articulated the traditional expectations placed upon women within the context of marriage and family. She expressed, *"They taught me that when a man and a woman gets married, they should be one person. And when you get married, you create a family which both a man and a woman should take care of and do things together."*

P4's narrative also delved into the harsh reality of dealing with extramarital affairs and the subsequent offspring they produce. She recounted her own experience, stating,

"And in that regard, personally I could try. As you know, we women are the ones that spend time with children at home. And when you realize that they said 'as a woman you have to persevere in marriage', and then you just persevere like that. I think that is all I can remember."

This firsthand account highlights the emotional turmoil and strain experienced by individuals like P4, whose marriages were shattered by infidelity and the introduction of children from extramarital affairs. The narrative underscores the profound impact such situations have on marital stability and emotional well-being.

Furthermore, the narratives of both P4 and P1 shed light on the complexities and challenges faced when dealing with the consequences of extramarital affairs and the resulting children. P1 shared her own harrowing experience, revealing how her husband's repeated infidelities led to the birth of numerous children outside of their marriage. The burden of caring for some of these children fell upon her, exacerbating the strain on an already troubled relationship.

The gravity of the situation is further emphasized by P1's revelation that her ex-husband fathered approximately 23 children outside of their marriage, illustrating the extent of the betrayal and its profound impact on the family unit.

In essence, the inclusion of verbatim from participants like P4 and P1 provides valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of childbearing within the context of marriage, shedding light on the emotional, psychological, and relational challenges that individuals face in navigating such complex situations.

4.2.11. Suspicions of infidelity as a cause of divorce

In examining the theme of suspicions of infidelity as a cause of divorce, participants provided insightful perspectives that underscored the complexities within marital relationships.

Participant 1 (P1) expressed skepticism towards conventional counseling approaches, suggesting a need for research-based interventions. P1 remarked,

“I feel what counselors teach people is not what is on the ground. So, they should, maybe, carry a research and recommend to the government, the church will come in, and they do it collectively and find a better way of keeping marriages.”

This viewpoint emphasizes the disconnect between theoretical counseling strategies and practical realities within marriages, advocating for a more empirically informed approach to marital support.

Participant 8 (P8) highlighted the role of financial considerations in exacerbating suspicions of infidelity within marriages. P8 remarked,

“And infidelity was also a cause of that because when a woman believes that a man is not doing enough, and she has the love of money, she tends to go where the money is found - to whoever makes her to have it. So, infidelity was also one of them.”

This perspective underscores how economic disparities and perceptions of inadequacy can contribute to relationship strain, leading individuals to seek validation or security outside of the marriage.

Overall, these verbatim illuminate the multifaceted nature of suspicions of infidelity as a contributing factor to divorce, emphasizing the importance of addressing both emotional and practical dimensions within marital counseling and support systems.

4.2.12. Home Abandonment

In the context of home abandonment as a cause of divorce, participant P1 vividly recounted her experience, shedding light on the profound impact of financial strain and emotional turmoil within her family dynamic. She expressed,

"So, he could just come with, maybe ZMW500.00. Sometimes even a ZMW100.00 and a pouch of potatoes, that is all. 'Kanchi' he was paying lobola elsewhere, and organizing a party where they had a wedding. So, it just clicked: 'Some time he came with this trousers, and this person is not fond of this type of dressing there should be something.'"

This poignant testimony unveils the intricate web of betrayal and neglect, as her husband's infidelity and financial irresponsibility led to his departure from the marital home, initiating a new chapter with another woman in Nchelenge.

Furthermore, participants highlighted instances where abandonment was palpable through the neglect of familial duties and obligations. P5 provided insight into her husband's detrimental behaviors, stating, *"My husband's excessive alcohol consumption and irresponsible behavior resulted in frequent late nights..."* This negligence extended beyond financial matters to encompass

emotional and physical absence during crucial family moments, exacerbating the strain on marital bonds and undermining family cohesion.

These verbatim accounts underscore the multifaceted nature of home abandonment as a catalyst for divorce, emphasizing the detrimental effects of financial instability, infidelity, and neglect on familial relationships.

4.2.13. Rape

In exploring the theme of rape as a cause of divorce, Participant 5 (P5) recounted a distressing incident involving her ex-husband. She stated, *"My ex-husband said he raped the girl under the influence of alcohol."* This statement underscores the gravity of the situation, where sexual violence occurred within the family dynamic.

P5's narrative sheds light on the multifaceted repercussions of such heinous acts. The incident not only shattered trust and inflicted emotional trauma but also carried significant legal implications. P5 described it as a *"horrible incident"* involving her husband's assault on her niece, emphasizing the severity of the offense.

This verbatim testimony underscores the complexity of marital breakdowns due to rape. It highlights how such actions not only breach the sanctity of the marital relationship but also extend to criminal behavior with profound legal and moral consequences.

The inclusion of verbatim testimony strengthens the justification for divorce in cases of rape. It provides firsthand accounts that elucidate the severity of the situation and the necessity of separation for the safety and well-being of the victim, as well as the pursuit of justice

4.2.14. Behavioral Responses

Participant 6 (P6) reflected on the significance of behavioral responses in marital relationships, particularly in situations where external attention becomes a factor. According to P6, he said, *"It is normal when a woman is attracting men who approach. But the key is that same woman – the response."* Here, P6 highlights the importance of how individuals react to such attention, implying that it can be a crucial factor in the dynamics of a relationship. P6 further emphasized, *"So the way*

she treated the situation – that was the major cause of divorce," suggesting that the response to external stimuli can significantly impact the stability of a marriage and cause divorce.

P6's observations indicate that the handling of conflicts within a relationship plays a pivotal role in determining its longevity. Additionally, P6 acknowledged personal responsibility in contributing to relationship challenges, admitting, *"Of course the bottling up also on my part, where this happen, you do not talk, you just keep it, you are not communicating."* This admission underscores the importance of open communication and proactive resolution of issues to prevent them from escalating.

In essence, P6's insights highlight the critical role of behavioral responses and communication in sustaining healthy marital relationships. They underscore the necessity for accountability, remorse, and effective communication as essential elements in navigating challenges and maintaining a strong bond between partners.

4.2.15. Engaging in Flirting and Entertaining Advances

In delving into the multifaceted realm of "Engaging in Flirting and Entertaining Advances," Participant 6 (P6) provided insightful reflections, shedding light on nuanced aspects beyond mere flirtatious exchanges. P6 articulated, *"Not really so much, but maybe the way she reacted to that. The way she behaved. The entertainment of advances."* This statement encapsulates a rich tapestry of perceptions regarding flirtatious interactions, suggesting a deeper exploration into the intricacies of human behavior and social dynamics.

At the heart of P6's observation lies a recognition of the significance attributed to the recipient's response and conduct in the context of flirting. Rather than focusing solely on the act of flirting itself, P6 underscores the pivotal role played by the recipient's reactions. This perspective implies that the manner in which individuals respond to advances, whether through reciprocation or nonchalance, holds paramount importance in shaping the dynamics of the interaction.

The notion of "entertaining advances" alludes to a spectrum of behaviors and attitudes adopted by individuals when confronted with flirtatious overtures. It encompasses a wide array of responses ranging from enthusiastic engagement to polite deflection or outright rejection. By acknowledging

the entertainment of advances as a distinct facet of interpersonal interactions, P6 highlights the subjective nature of flirtation and the diverse ways in which individuals navigate such encounters.

Furthermore, P6's observation invites contemplation on the underlying motivations and intentions driving flirtatious behavior. Is the act of entertaining advances driven by genuine interest, social norms, or a desire for validation and attention? By probing into the intricacies of human interaction, P6 prompts a deeper examination of the psychological and sociocultural factors at play in the realm of flirting.

Moreover, P6's perspective prompts consideration of the broader implications of engaging in flirtatious behavior within various social contexts. How do power dynamics, gender norms, and cultural expectations influence the dynamics of flirtation? By contextualizing flirtatious exchanges within larger sociocultural frameworks, P6 encourages a more nuanced understanding of the complexities inherent in interpersonal relationships.

In essence, P6's insights underscore the multifaceted nature of "Engaging in Flirting and Entertaining Advances." Beyond surface-level flirtatious banter, P6 directs attention towards the intricate interplay of behaviors, responses, and underlying motivations that characterize such interactions. By incorporating verbatim to justify findings, P6's contribution enriches our understanding of the subtle nuances embedded within the fabric of human sociality. Thus, P6's perspective serves as a valuable catalyst for further exploration and analysis within the realm of interpersonal dynamics and communication.

4.2.16. The Lack of Ongoing Learning

In examining the theme of "The Lack of Ongoing Learning" as a cause, participant 3 (P3) articulated a poignant perspective, stating, *"If he does not respect you, even your children will not be able to respect you – and they will not be obeying you. The children will be spoiled. Children are extremely destroyed if parents are constantly involved in conflicts or they do not talk to each other properly. In such an environment, a woman will have fear when she wants to do something. She will be living as if she is not in her home."*

P3's insight underscores the intricate dynamics within familial relationships. It highlights how a lack of ongoing learning, particularly in terms of mutual respect and effective communication, can detrimentally impact not only parental authority but also the emotional well-being of children and the sense of security within the household. This perspective emphasizes the importance of continuous learning and growth within the family unit to foster a nurturing and supportive environment conducive to positive development.

4.2.17. Technology and Privacy Issues

In exploring the intersection of technology and privacy issues as potential causes of divorce, participant 9 (P9) highlighted the significant impact of modern devices on marital relationships. P9 emphasized the pervasive influence of smartphones, remarking, "*Number three, the issue of the phone like I said. Technologies brought more harm than good.*" This assertion underscores a common concern regarding the intrusion of technology into intimate spheres of life.

Moreover, P9 acknowledged the nuanced nature of technology's effects, recognizing both its advantages and disadvantages. They remarked, "*However, if not well handled, I think it has got the pros and cons within it.*" This acknowledgment reflects an awareness of the complexities inherent in managing technology within a relationship.

P9 further illustrated the potential pitfalls of unchecked technology usage within marriage by recounting a personal scenario. They described a situation where acquiescing to a spouse's demand for access to their phone was accompanied by a sense of unease, stating, "*So, if my wife says, 'I want the phone,' I don't need to hesitate. Let me just give it.*" This admission highlights the tension between maintaining privacy and fostering trust within a relationship.

Additionally, P9 pointed out the importance of education in navigating the challenges posed by technology in marriage. They observed, "*So, if couples are not educated about the issue of technology, I think they are marriages are bound to failure.*" This perspective emphasizes the necessity of communication and mutual understanding in addressing potential conflicts arising from technology use.

In sum, P9's remarks underscore the multifaceted nature of technology's impact on marital relationships, highlighting the need for awareness, communication, and informed decision-making to mitigate potential risks and preserve marital harmony.

4.2.18. Financial Strain

In exploring the theme of Financial Strain as a cause of divorce, participant 2, the ex-husband, emphasized the pivotal role of money in marital stability. He succinctly articulated,

"Then another thing, people love money. If you do not have money, your marriage will not last; the woman will admire and go to someone who has money. So, if you do not have money, your marriage will easily break."

This sentiment underscores the significant pressure that financial instability can exert on a relationship, leading to potential dissolution.

Expanding on his perspective, participant 2 further lamented the shifting dynamics in modern marriages, noting,

"If I am working as a man and I am married, in those days even if a man loses his job, the marriage could continue; but these days the woman will leave as soon as her husband loses his source of income. Nowadays marriages are like contracts – as long as you live."

His words reflect a disillusionment with contemporary marital norms, highlighting a perceived lack of enduring commitment amidst financial challenges.

Contrastingly, participant 8 offered a more optimistic viewpoint, advocating for shared responsibility and mutual understanding in managing financial matters within a marriage. They remarked,

"That is why they need to be counselled because the money that comes in the house is not written 'made by who'; it is just money. So, when there is shared responsibility in a home, it doesn't matter who brings what in the house."

This perspective underscores the importance of communication and cooperation in navigating financial strain, suggesting that a collaborative approach can mitigate its detrimental effects on the marital bond.

Incorporating these verbatim provides insight into the diverse attitudes towards financial strain as a factor influencing divorce. While participant 2 expresses concern about the erosion of traditional values and the fragility of modern marriages in the face of economic challenges, participant 8 highlights the potential for resilience and solidarity through shared responsibility and effective communication. These contrasting viewpoints contribute to a nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding the intersection of finances and marital stability.

4.2.19. Lack of Emotional Support.

In exploring the theme of Lack of Emotional Support as a cause of divorce, participants shed light on the intricate dynamics within marriages where emotional sustenance is lacking.

P6 reflects on the repercussions of emotional neglect within a marital context, emphasizing the failure of one partner to assert themselves in addressing issues. They recount,

“The advances, and somebody does not come out strong as a married person to put a stop to it. Today I am still condemned by some clergy, the church members to say, that was not the basis enough to divorce – which could be true – I want to respect their opinion. But the question becomes, where does it start from? Do people just start to copulate or to have sex? No, it is a process.”

This narrative underscores the gradual erosion of emotional bonds and the subsequent strain it places on the relationship.

P3 elaborates on the detrimental effects of lacking emotional support, particularly when seeking assistance from the partner's family. They elucidate,

“But also, the other issue was the thing where you present a matter to this person’s family - to seek help, they reprimand you in a wrong way, thinking that possibly you are actually the one who is the problem when the person who is the problem is their own person.”

Here, the participant highlights the disheartening experience of being misunderstood and unfairly blamed, exacerbating the already challenging situation.

These verbatim accounts underscore the profound impact of emotional support—or its absence—on the stability and longevity of marital relationships. They elucidate the complex interplay of emotions, communication, and external influences that contribute to the dissolution of marriages

4.2.20. Lack of Respect

Lack of respect emerges as a powerful factor in stressful relationship dynamics, providing an unsupportive environment that promotes communication breakdowns and general dissatisfaction. Participants regularly link a lack of respect to a refusal to accept wrongdoing and insulting behavior, with disrespectful language emerging as a major driver to the relationship's disintegration. The variations on this topic add levels of complexity, such as abusive words used while intoxicated, a lack of moral support, and undermining each other's contributions, highlighting the diverse impact of disrespect on marriages. P3 emphasizes behavior and attitude as major causes to divorce, with the loss of respect being a fundamental issue.

The reluctance to admit wrongdoing and the unwillingness to change become significant challenges in addressing marital issues. P3 said, *“So, to break it down, I think I talked about lack of respect, that when respect is lost in a home, I think it tends to lead people to a point where they feel like I have had it.”*

P1 highlights the disrespect she endured, especially when her ex-husband used abusive language, particularly when intoxicated. *P1 shares, “The respect, though not very much. Respect in the sense that sometimes he wouldn’t just shout at you.”* This instance showcases how lack of respect can manifest through verbal abuse, further deteriorating the marital bond.

P6 provides a nuanced analysis of disrespect, highlighting the significance of reciprocal acknowledgment and thoughtfulness in upholding respect. P6 states,

"Respect for me is thinking about me before you think about yourself. If you don't accept that I'm not the smartest man on the planet, that I'm not the most attractive man on the planet, or that I'm not the most hardworking man on the planet, a lot of people will treat you disrespectfully."

Furthermore, P6's encounter with his wife's flirting and the resulting disrespectful behavior illustrates the tremendous impact of actions on respect in marriage. The refusal to confess wrongdoing, along with a defensive attitude, grew the lack of respect and contributed to the relationship's breakdown. P6 says, *"The way she handled the problem was the primary cause of divorce. The reluctance to confess wrongdoing demonstrated a lack of respect"*. P8 elaborates on the complex character of contempt, mentioning diminishing one another's efforts and a lack of moral support as contributing elements. His story illustrates the negative influence of disrespectful behavior on the overall health of a marriage.

P8 explains, *"Lack of respect, as I already stated, a lack of moral support at home, criticizing each other in front of children. So such minor details brought the marriage to an end."*

In the context of disrespect, P8 emphasizes the value of mutual respect in decision-making and general unity within a marriage. His example of disrespectful behavior, such as making major decisions without consulting the partner, exemplifies the breakdown of oneness in a marriage. P8 states, *"Anything done without regard for the other partner is rude. That is why the Bible refers to a husband and wife as one body, implying that there must be unity in whatever they do."*

Understanding the impact of a lack of respect entails identifying its various manifestations, such as verbal abuse, beating contributions, and inability to accept each other's opinions. Interventions addressing this issue must consider the intricacies of a marriage's behavior, attitude, and communication styles. Developing techniques to create mutual respect, good communication, and unity is critical for establishing healthy marital dynamics and minimizing relationship breakdowns.

4.2.21 Lack of Trust

Lack of trust emerges as a key component in marital arguments and issues, leading to recurrent suspicions and strained communication. Participants described cases in which a lack of trust played a significant role in marital dissolution, linking mistrust to broader interpersonal issues. The

nuanced parts of this issue include maintaining appearances to safeguard the marriage and emphasizing the role of mistrust in influencing marital dynamics.

P1 describes an immediate encounter with the negative consequences of mistrust. During a spell of unemployment, she obtained a temporary job at the Agricultural Show. Despite having confirmation of her presence and activities, her husband's distrust erupted into a fight, almost resulting in a physical encounter. P1 highlights the significance of unfounded suspicions, noting, *"...even throughout our divorce process that is the only argument he gave. Then I answered, "For that one, I have proof." I was prepared to go to Parmalat so that he could establish I was not with another man but working."*

Similarly, P2 describes a circumstance in which mistrust formed as a result of a misunderstanding during the voter registration process. Despite her attempts to clarify and explain her behavior, her husband remained skeptical, doubting her fidelity. This lack of trust was a big contributing cause to their divorce.

4.2.22. Substance Abuse and Addiction

In the thematic analysis of Substance Abuse and Addiction as a cause of divorce, the participants provided insightful accounts that shed light on the detrimental effects of alcohol misuse within marital relationships.

Participant 5 (P5) she vividly expressed,

"The second cause of divorce is, he used to drink alcohol carelessly... he never used to respect me because whenever he was drunk, he used to cause confusion... if he finds you with friends, he could not wait for them to go first; he would start causing confusion here and there."

This poignant testimony underscores the disruptive behavior and lack of regard for the spouse's feelings that often accompany substance abuse, leading to marital discord.

Participant 1, ex-wife, (P1) corroborated this sentiment, asserting, *"Insulting not really, but sometimes especially, when he is drunk, he used to do that, but not insulting whereby mentioning*

those insults." Here, P1 highlights the nuanced nature of the emotional toll inflicted by alcohol-induced behavior, emphasizing that while direct insults may not always occur, the atmosphere of disrespect and discomfort persists.

This verbatim serve to substantiate the theme of Substance Abuse and Addiction as a significant contributor to marital breakdown. They illustrate the erosion of trust, respect, and emotional well-being within the marital dynamic, underscoring the imperative for intervention and support for individuals grappling with substance misuse issues to preserve healthy relationships.

Corroborating this perspective, Participant 1 (P1), an ex-wife, noted: "Insulting not really, but sometimes especially when he is drunk, he used to do that, but not insulting whereby mentioning those insults." Here, P1 underscores the subtleties of the emotional distress caused by alcohol-induced behavior. While direct insults may be absent, the pervasive atmosphere of disrespect and discomfort still profoundly impacts the relationship.

These firsthand accounts underline the theme of Substance Abuse and Addiction as pivotal factors in marital breakdowns. They reveal how trust, respect, and emotional well-being can erode within the marital bond, highlighting the critical need for targeted interventions and support. Addressing substance misuse issues is imperative not only for individual health but also for maintaining the integrity of marital relationships.

4.2.23. Physical and Mental Abuse

In exploring the theme of Physical and Mental Abuse as a cause of divorce, Participant 2 (P2) recounts a distressing incident that sheds light on the complexities within their relationship. P2 vividly describes an altercation stemming from a misunderstanding upon returning home after attempting to obtain a voter's card with friends. P2 explains,

"When I reached home, my wife thought I came back from seeing a girlfriend. When I told her I was getting a voter's card, she did not buy into that. She suspected me." This suspicion quickly escalates into a threatening confrontation, with P2 recalling how their spouse brandished a knife, uttering menacing threats I will kill you, what and what."

The intensity of the situation is palpable as P2 reflects on their initial disbelief, assuming their spouse's actions were perhaps exaggerated or not genuinely harmful. However, the gravity of the situation becomes apparent as P2 recounts how their spouse persistently pursued them, even into the bathroom, wielding the knife and reiterating intent to cause harm: *"I will stab you with a knife. I will kill you."*

The escalation of violence extends beyond verbal threats, as P2 describes how their spouse proceeded to vandalize property, slashing the car's tires with the same knife used in earlier threats. This alarming behavior continues as P2's spouse exhibits signs of emotional distress, disrobing and discarding clothing in a volatile display.

Amidst the chaos, P2 is confronted with a sobering realization of their vulnerability, acknowledging the potential consequences of retaliating against their spouse's aggression, *"If I beat her up in this condition, she might end up taking me to the police."* This internal conflict underscores the intricate dynamics of power, control, and fear that permeate abusive relationships, illustrating the multifaceted nature of physical and mental abuse as contributing factors to marital discord and, ultimately, divorce.

From these narrations, it becomes evident that physical and mental abuse in marriage is multifaceted, involving not just the threat or act of physical harm but also psychological elements that instill fear, manipulate, and control the abused partner. Such conditions not only endanger the individuals involved but also fundamentally undermine the trust and safety necessary for a healthy marital relationship.

Reflecting on this narrative, it is imperative to address the complex layers of abuse within marriage counseling frameworks. Effective interventions must not only aim to resolve or mediate immediate conflicts but also delve deeper into the underlying issues of mistrust, control, and emotional instability that fuel such destructive behaviors. Counseling programs need to incorporate strategies for recognizing signs of abuse early, providing victims with safe avenues for support, and educating couples about healthy ways to resolve conflicts and express emotions. Understanding and intervening in these dynamics are crucial for preventing such extreme outcomes and fostering safer, more respectful relationships. This study's findings highlight the urgent need for

comprehensive approaches in marital counseling that prioritize safety, respect, and constructive communication as foundational elements of marital stability.

4.2.24. Employment Issues and Marital Dissolution

In the realm of employment issues and their correlation with marital dissolution, participant P7, the ex-husband, candidly shared his perspective, stating, *"For example, like the way my marriage ended. When I was working, there was peace at home. But when I spent three months without getting paid, there was no peace. My wife ran away to her family."*

This verbatim highlight a significant theme where financial instability due to employment problems led to marital discord. P7's testimony underscores the impact of financial stress on the stability of the marital relationship. The loss of income for an extended period disrupted the harmony within the household, ultimately contributing to the breakdown of the marriage. This firsthand account elucidates the intricate interplay between economic factors and marital dynamics, shedding light on a common but often overlooked catalyst for marital dissolution.

4.3. Existing Content of Marriage Counseling Programs

Thematic findings from an examination of current marriage counseling content, with a focus on conflict resolution, blended family dynamics, personal hygiene, communication, respect, home management, sex education, financial management, zero infidelity, oneness, in-law management, and confidentiality. This section aimed to provide a nuanced view of how these themes are treated in marriage counseling, focusing on cultural context, practicalities, and the changing dynamics of marital relationships.

4.3.1. Emergent Themes on Existing Content of Current Marriage Counseling Programs

Table 4.2 provides an overview of the key themes that have emerged concerning the existing content and structure of current marriage counseling programs. This table summarizes participant responses and interprets their experiences and insights regarding how effectively these programs address their marital challenges

Table 4. 3. The existing content and structure of current marriage counseling programs. Source (Author)

| PARTICIPANTS | CODE | THEME | INTERPRETATION | EXAMPLE |
|--------------|--------|----------------------------------|---|---|
| P1. | Code30 | Accesses to counselling services | Exploring the accessibility of marriage counseling services in addressing complex marital issues. | The participant narrates her encounters with counseling sessions and the challenges in reconciling counseling teachings with the real-life complexities of her marital situation. |
| P1. | Code31 | Coping Mechanisms | Examine participant narratives on coping mechanisms employed during marital challenges related to unfaithfulness. | Transcript segment where P1 discusses her coping mechanisms, including protective actions and seeking support from friends. |
| P1. | Code32 | Emotional Impact | Investigate the emotional impact on participants due to issues of | Transcript segment where P1 expresses the emotional toll of unfaithfulness on |

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| | | | unfaithfulness and lack of trust. | her, highlighting the need for emotional support. |
| P1. | Code33 | Infidelity Impact on Marriage Counseling | Understanding how infidelity influences the content of marriage counseling programs. | Participant P1 discusses how her husband's infidelity affected her experience with marriage counseling, highlighting instances where counseling advice on protecting one's partner clashed with the reality of multiple relationships. |
| P1. | Code34 | In-Law Involvement | Examine the involvement of in-laws in addressing issues of unfaithfulness and lack of trust within marriages. | Transcript segment where P1 recounts involving her in-laws in addressing the unfaithfulness issue, illustrating their support during challenging times. |

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| P3. | Code34 | Role of Church | Church counseling avoids teaching practices like Ichipe Cha Ng'anda, associating them with demonic elements | Some exceptions: Occasionally, church counselors might incorporate traditional teachings, showing a more comprehensive approach. |
| P5. | Code34 | Role of Church | Church counseling emphasizes understanding the biblical position of marriage. | Focus on how God wants a man and woman to stay together, emphasizing marriage as a divine gift. |
| P7. | Code34 | In-Law Involvement | Couples should be cautious and respectful in managing relationships with in-laws. | Understanding the sense of entitlement that in-laws may feel and handling it diplomatically. |
| P8. | Code34 | In-Law Involvement | Marriage counselors should guide couples on maintaining a healthy relationship with in-laws, treating | I believe that the same way I treat my parents is the same way I treat the parents of my |

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| | | | both sets of parents equally, and handling potential conflicts arising from interference by siblings. | partner, of my supposedly wife - and she should do the same... And siblings also can be a source of conflict where, as a husband you continue listening to what your siblings are saying against your wife, and you are not defending her before them. |
| P1. | Code35 | Legal Intervention | Explore participant experiences related to legal intervention or support sought during marriage challenges. | Transcript segment where P1 shares an incident of legal intervention initiated by the church to address issues of unfaithfulness. |
| P1. | Code36 | Program Effectiveness | Assessing the perceived effectiveness of marriage counseling programs. | Participant P1 shares experiences of counseling advice on protecting a partner and its incongruity with the |

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| | | | | actual behavior of the spouse, raising questions about the effectiveness of the counseling received. |
| P1. | Code37 | Role of Church | Investigate the role of the church in addressing issues of unfaithfulness and lack of trust within marriages. | Transcript segment where P1 discusses how the church played a supportive role during her marital challenges, highlighting their efforts to address |
| P1. | Code38 | Unexplored or Unique Issues | Capturing issues raised by participants that may not fit predefined codes. | Participant P1 introduces unique aspects, such as her mother's involvement and the unexpected dynamics of interactions with her husband's girlfriends during counseling, suggesting unexplored facets of counseling issues. |

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| P2. | Code39 | Alcohol and Party Influence | Explore how alcohol-related behaviors and socializing habits contribute to marital conflicts. | The participant highlights the negative impact of the spouse's excessive drinking and frequent attendance at parties on marital harmony and financial stability. |
| P2. | Code40 | Cleanliness and Appearance | Guidance on maintaining cleanliness, personal hygiene, and appearance to foster a positive marital atmosphere. | But that does not mean that I should be dirt. So, once I start like just nagging, dirt, the man will definitely find a way of finding someone who is better than me of which I am the best of them all. |
| P2. | Code41 | Communication | Guidance on effective communication within a marriage, including addressing issues calmly and maintaining open dialogue. | Each time I approach my husband physically, as a woman, traditionally have to kneel down always... be |

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| | | | | communicating throughout, and also to maintain the romance you had during courtship, like you do not just stop. |
| P4. | Code41 | Communication | Understanding each other's perspectives and decoding messages is emphasized. | Effective communication involves precise expression, and misunderstandings should be clarified |
| P6. | Code41 | Communication | Examination of how marriage counseling programs address or fail to address communication breakdowns, hindering couples from effectively expressing | So in a summary, we can say, maybe what caused divorce is that you were both not speaking out? So when a small thing happened, you would just say: "I am done." |
| P8. | Code41 | Communication | Emphasis on teaching couples effective and respectful communication skills, both in private and in | Counseling sessions could focus on active listening, expressing needs without demeaning |

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| | | | front of others, to prevent breakdowns in mutual respect. | language, and fostering an environment where both partners feel heard and RESPECT |
| P9. | Code41 | Communication | Emphasis on effective communication to avoid misunderstandings, suspicion, and foster transparency in the relationship. | Yes, confidentiality... communication is one vital component in marriage counselling. If you don't communicate, then you are planning to fail the marriage. |
| P9. | Code41 | Communication | Evaluation of how marriage counseling programs address the importance of effective communication between spouses, emphasizing openness, active listening, and honest expression of thoughts and feelings. | The current marriage counseling programs should thoroughly assess how well they incorporate modules or sessions that emphasize the development of effective communication skills within couples. This |

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| | | | | includes addressing issues related to active listening, expression of emotions, and fostering an environment where both partners feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and concerns. |
| P2. | Code42 | Competing priorities and lack of mutual support. | Exploration of how differing priorities and lack of support contribute to marital dissatisfaction | The participant mentions the competition for car usage during weekends as a symbol of conflicting priorities and the subsequent decision to sell the car. |
| P2. | Code42 | Conflict Resolution | Techniques and strategies for resolving conflicts within a marital relationship. | If your partner is angry – like the heart is just burning, and then you just come and confront that partner of yours, definitely what you |

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| | | | | will receive is like fire. : He or she will be on you... So, you will have to wait; you blow it off – meaning the heart should cool down, then that is when you can approach your partner. |
| P2. | Code42 | Conflict Resolution Strategies | Techniques for managing conflicts within marriage, including the importance of patience and timing in addressing issues. | They tell us to put water in your mouth, like you put water in your mouth. If your partner is angry or there is misunderstanding, we were taught to be putting water in our mouths, like you don't respond, in short. |
| P2. | Code42 | Conflict Resolution | Instances where the respondent discusses challenges in resolving conflicts within the marriage, leading to a | Transcript segment where the respondent narrates an incident where a misunderstanding escalated due to lack |

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| | | | breakdown of communication. | of effective conflict resolution skills. |
| P3. | Code42 | Conflict Resolution: | Importance of Communication: Both traditional and church counseling stress the significance of communication in conflict resolution. | Structured Approach: There is a structured approach to conflict resolution, starting with open communication between partners and involving trusted individuals if needed |
| P2. | Code43 | Cultural and Traditional Beliefs | Acknowledgment of challenges and potential imbalances arising from traditional gender roles and expectations. | But in other things where they are benefitting, they will say, "No, I am the head of the house." And it is also a subject to debate in the sense that if men are not careful, those women... once you are given a chance to be in front, you can lead them forever. |

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| P2. | Code43 | Cultural and Traditional Beliefs | Incorporation of cultural and traditional beliefs into marital counseling, including gender-specific roles and expectations. | Traditionally, they have taught me that what is supposed to be used is the razor blade. But we are living in a changing society; in the modern world, we use shavers |
| P2. | Code43 | Cultural and Traditional Beliefs | Guidance on maintaining traditional gender roles and expectations within a marriage, including the responsibilities of cooking, cleaning, and supporting the husband | In the morning I should make sure that I cook Nsima. He should eat something solid so that even if he goes anywhere, he shouldn't be able to feel hungry or admire other things. |
| P3. | Code43 | Cultural and Traditional Beliefs | Ichipe Cha Ng'anda (Symbolic Communication in Traditional Counseling) | Shaving: Rituals involve practices like shaving, indicating intimacy. However, the respondent questions the practicality of such rituals. |

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| P4. | Code43 | Traditional Counseling: | Emphasis on roles in the relationship, discussing responsibilities, and sex education. | Dos and Don'ts: Traditional counseling involves teachings on the dos and don'ts of marriage. |
| P7. | Code43 | Traditional Counseling: | Advising couples to avoid blindly adhering to traditions, as some traditions introduced during weddings may negatively impact the marriage. | Second, when they are getting married, they should not follow those traditions they like doing... when I was getting married, the things that were brought destroyed our marriage. |
| P7. | Code43 | Traditional Counseling: | Highlighting the detrimental effects of specific traditional items (Ichipe cha Ng'anda) on marriages, often associated with charms or negative intentions. | So after finding out, I discovered that even Ichipe cha Ng'anda also contributed to the marriage breakdown... those pieces of cloth they bring, but they put charms to those pieces of cloth, and others even put |

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| | | | | those pieces of cloth in charms. |
| P7. | Code43 | Traditional Counseling: | Revealing that some traditional items may carry hidden intentions or negative energies, such as charms placed by individuals seeking to disrupt the marriage. | ..Others even put those pieces of cloth in charms. And those who may not be happy for that woman to get married will end up putting charms for the destruction of marriage. |
| P2. | Code44 | Departure from spiritual commitment. | Examining how a lack of commitment to spiritual values impacts marital dynamics. | The participant expresses dissatisfaction with the spouse's diminishing commitment to church activities, leading to a sense of shame as he assumes a leadership role in the church. |
| P2. | Code45 | Financial strain and mismanagement. | Instances where financial issues, including budgeting | The participant discusses how money meant for household expenses |

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| | | | for social events, lead to conflicts. | was diverted to fund social events, causing financial strain and affecting overall progress. |
| P8. | Code45 | Financial strain and mismanagement. | Marriage counseling should include financial education to address issues such as transparency in finances, planning, shared responsibility, and avoiding secrecy in financial matters. | So marriage counselors should focus on that, and they will help a lot of marriages... let them also focus on financial education in the house. If this system of “my |
| P8. | Code45 | Financial strain and mismanagement. | Integration of financial education within marriage counseling programs, emphasizing effective communication about financial matters to prevent undermining and dissatisfaction. | Marriage counseling programs could include modules on financial literacy, teaching couples how to communicate openly about money, understand each other's financial perspectives, and make joint decisions to foster financial harmony. |

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| P2. | Code46 | Forgiveness and Reconciliation | Insights on the role of forgiveness in marital relationships and the importance of resolving issues before engaging in intimate moments. | Issues should be ironed out, and both of you should be sure that you have forgiven each other wholeheartedly. Unlike, for example, let us say the other partner has committed adultery today... there is no way you can have sex whilst you have issues with your partner. |
| P2. | Code47 | Gender Roles and Household Duties | Instruction on traditional gender roles, expectations, and responsibilities related to household duties. | Like the way I am supposed to keep my husband, like when it comes to food... And respect, actually, was a topping aspect. |
| P2. | Code48 | Adultery | Traditional beliefs on dealing with adultery, including acceptance and understanding, especially from the woman's perspective. | If a man commits adultery, traditionally I think it's something that a woman should understand and |

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| | | | | accept; that's what we have been taught. |
| P2. | Code49 | Influence of Extended Family | Understanding how relationships with extended family members, particularly in-law dynamics, affect the marital relationship. | The participant describes how the spouse's older sister, despite being older, contributed to conflicts and failed to provide guidance. |
| P2. | Code50 | Lack of Shared Interests in Leisure Activities | Instances where the respondent expresses dissatisfaction with the partner's interests, such as excessive partying, leading to conflicts in the marriage. | Transcript segment highlighting how the respondent's wife's frequent attendance at parties and preference for such activities over church attendance contributed to marital issues. |
| P2. | Code51 | Lack of trust and breakdown in communication. | Instances where mistrust and communication issues contribute to marital problems. | The participant recounts an incident where a misunderstanding arose due to lack of trust and effective communication |

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| | | | | regarding obtaining a voter's card. |
| P2. | Code52 | Limited Family support | Instances where the respondent indicates a lack of support from the spouse's family, especially in controlling negative behaviors. | Transcript segment where the respondent mentions the lack of support from the in-law in controlling the spouse's behavior, contributing to marital issues. |
| P2. | Code53 | Marriage Counseling Content | Respondent states that men are not usually counseled much, and women receive more guidance. | Men, in particular, are not often sat down for counseling, and the focus is on how to take care of a woman. |
| P2. | Code54 | Respect and Submission | Emphasis on showing respect to the husband, accepting blame even when undeserved, and submitting to maintain harmony in the family. | To them, that is respect. You do not shout at them in the presence of the children. If you want to ask anything wrong, it is better you ask in the bedroom. |

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| P2. | Code54 | Respect | Emphasis on the importance of submission, respect, and understanding traditional gender roles within the marital context. | : Even when you are from fighting, as a woman, is to submit. Even if you are not in the mood, you just have to submit... Like him being the head of the house, if there is anything troubling at night – like the thieves, he should be in front. |
| P3. | Code54 | Respect | Emphasis on a man's responsibility to provide and be the head of the family. | Taking Care of the Wife: Discussion about a man's responsibility to provide for the wife and how women should fulfill their roles. The teaching includes expectations for mutual respect, with a particular emphasis on women respecting men. |
| P5. | Code54 | Respect | Respect is demonstrated through | Mutual respect involves considering |

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| | | | actions more than verbal expressions. | each other's feelings and opinions, even if disagreements exist. Openness, transparency, and involvement in each other's lives are indicators of respect. |
| P2. | Code55 | Sex Education | Guidance on sexual matters, submission, and intimate hygiene practices, including the significance of mutual cleaning and grooming. | Even if you are not in the mood, you just have to submit. When it comes to cleaning, like in my tradition, if I clean myself without the knowledge of my husband – it is an offence |
| P2. | Code55 | Sex Education | Guidance on sexual matters, including the importance of intimacy, forgiveness, and navigating issues related to sex within marriage. | Sex unites the two partners. Also for leisure. And the other thing, it is also for forgiving... like we are just being taught that you are just being raped in your own home. You are just |

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| | | | | submitting because you were taught to; and you do not even enjoy sex. |
| P3. | Code55 | Sex Education: | Church Perspective: Sex is regarded as a gift from God, and church counseling includes dos and don'ts about sexual practices. | Traditional Perspective: Traditional counseling addresses sex education, discussing the boundaries and expectations within marriage. |
| P8. | Code55 | Sex Education: | Marriage counselors should emphasize the significance of sex education, addressing the importance of sexual satisfaction, communication in the bedroom, and openness in discussing sexual preferences. | Let them emphasize on this communication at that particular time. One must know where to strike because, you have not communicated, you don't know where to touch your friend for their sexual emotions to be provoked... So, let the counselors |

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| | | | | focus much on issues of the bedroom, unlike where the other person is failing to come out. So late marriage counselors focus on issues of sexual activity in bedroom for married people. |
| P2. | Code56 | Sleeping Arrangements | Traditional expectations regarding the sleeping arrangements, emphasizing the positioning of the husband in front for protection. | Traditionally, a man sleeps in front; the woman is always supposed to be at the back. But it depends on how you understand each other, but that is how it is supposed to be. |
| P3. | Code57 | Curriculum | Respondent suggests the need for revising marriage counseling curricula, particularly in traditional counseling, to emphasize open communication rather | Acknowledges exceptions within church counseling where traditional teachings are included but not without critique. |

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| | | | than relying solely on symbols. | |
| P3. | Code58 | Focus on Social and Biblical Aspects: | Marriage counseling often focuses on the social aspects of the couple. | The emphasis differs based on the counseling source; church counseling focuses on biblical aspects, while traditional counseling emphasizes social dynamics. |
| P3. | Code58 | Symbolic Communication: | Significance: Traditional counseling uses symbols like beads to communicate nonverbally, especially regarding issues like menstruation. | Critique: Respondent expresses concern about over-reliance on symbols hindering open communication between partners. |
| P4. | Code59 | Accessibility | Accessibility pertains to the ease with which individuals can access and benefit from marriage counseling programs. | The participant described a situation where her needs were not met, leading to arguments. This |

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| | | | | could prompt an exploration of how accessible and responsive counseling programs are to diverse needs. |
| P4. | Code60 | Differences and Similarities | This theme involves comparing the teachings of marriage counseling with actual experiences within the marriage. | The participant highlighted discrepancies between the teachings of marriage counseling and the actual experiences in her marriage, showcasing potential areas for improvement in counseling program content. |
| P4. | Code61 | Effectiveness | This theme encompasses perspectives on the effectiveness of current marriage counseling programs. | The participant indicated that the absence of financial support led to dissatisfaction in the marriage, suggesting a |

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| | | | | potential area where counseling programs might need improvement. |
| P4. | Code62 | Program Content | This theme represents insights related to the content covered in marriage counseling programs. | The participant expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of sponsorship and the husband's inability to take care of the family, highlighting a gap in the content of marriage counseling programs. |
| P6. | Code63 | Financial Management: | Openness about money, making budgets together, and avoiding surprises are essential. | Family members' financial requests should be handled collectively to avoid misunderstandings. |
| P6. | Code64 | Lack of Knowledge | Insufficient understanding within marriage counseling programs, leading to challenges in providing couples | Lack of knowledge, basically put. You cannot practice what you do not know. So because there was no knowledge, there |

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| | | | with the necessary knowledge and guidance. | was nothing to guide. |
| P7. | Code65 | Education on Marriage Preparation | Advocating for proper education on marriage preparation, including awareness of potential harmful practices and the importance of spiritual beliefs. | Those things – you cannot really see anything when they are bringing, but those pieces of cloth they bring, but they put charms to those pieces of cloth, and others even put those pieces of cloth in charms. |
| P7. | Code66 | Importance of Knowing God | Emphasizing the significance of a spiritual foundation and relationship with God in preparing for marriage. | First, they should know God. According to what I experienced, a person should know God. |
| P7. | Code67 | Role of Matrons and Charm Avoidance | Stressing the importance of selecting matrons who prioritize faith in God over harmful practices, and advising against | So, women should be taught to believe in God rather than those things they bring... they should choose matrons who know God. |

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| | | | involving charms or witchcraft in marriage preparations. | |
| P8. | Code68 | Blended Family Dynamics | Marriage counselors should provide guidance on handling blended families, ensuring that children from previous relationships are treated equally and that there is harmony in the new family structure. | For example, a blended family where a man came in with a son, the woman also came with a son. Then they have a son. Then they are playing outside. Then the son is beaten and comes and is crying and says he's been beaten by those two... So, marriage counselors are coming in to blend those blended children; to treat everyone equally. |
| P8. | Code69 | Comprehensive Counseling Coverage | Marriage counseling should address various aspects of marriage, including finances, sex, | I think counseling should focus in all angles of marriage because these are two individuals |

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| | | | relations with parents and siblings, religious beliefs, and budgeting. | coming together, who come from different backgrounds and culture, and who have never grown together... counseling should cater for all areas: finances, sex, relations like parents and siblings, church/religion, budgeting - in all aspects like a human life cannot be catered in a particular area, but in all areas - so should counseling, in every area. |
| P8. | Code70 | Faith and Shared Responsibility | Marriage counselors should address issues related to faith, emphasizing the importance of shared religious beliefs and discussing the responsibilities and | So, we need also to concentrate on issues of faith. And not just that, also concentrate on the issue of shared responsibility in a home... So, there has |

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| | | | roles of each partner within the marriage. | to be a balance in shared responsibility in a home, because that is why now a woman takes responsibility of paying bills which a man should do. |
| P8. | Code71 | Infidelity Prevention and Relationship Satisfaction | Incorporation of strategies to prevent infidelity and enhance relationship satisfaction, addressing underlying issues that may lead to extramarital affairs. | Counseling programs may include sessions on building emotional intimacy, understanding each other's needs, and creating a supportive environment to minimize the likelihood of seeking satisfaction outside the marriage. |
| P8. | Code72 | Marriage as a Union: | Couples need to synchronize their lives and prioritize the marriage over individual desires. | Realizing that marriage involves compromise and maturity, and unrealistic expectations should |

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| | | | | be adjusted to practical realities. Valuing and respecting the spouse, even if they deviate from initial dreams. |
| P9. | Code73 | Confidentiality and Privacy | The importance of keeping marital issues private and not publicizing them to third parties. | The main things taught in marriage counselling are mainly how to keep things in the home, and you don't have to publicize them to the third parties... whatever happens inside, you keep them to yourselves. |
| P9. | Code74 | Continuous Learning and Adaptation | Evaluation of counseling programs to determine whether they emphasize the importance of continuous learning within marriages, encouraging couples to adapt to changing circumstances and | Existing counseling programs should be scrutinized to ensure they highlight the significance of ongoing learning within marriages. Couples need to be equipped with tools to adapt to new |

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| | | | learn more about each other throughout their journey. | phases in their relationship, fostering resilience and growth. |
| P9. | Code75 | Faithfulness and Truthfulness | Encouraging spouses to be faithful and truthful to each other, maintaining trust and honesty in the relationship. | You need, basically to live your own life, and do not do things which might damage your marriage at the end of the day. Whatever you are doing, whether in the presence or outside the presence of your spouse, you need just to be faithful and truthful. |
| P9. | Code76 | Financial Management | Guidance on budgeting as a family and making financial decisions collaboratively. | Concerning budgeting in marriage counselling we were taught that, when you get married, you budget together as a family with your spouse. |

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| P9. | Code77 | Financial Transparency and Management | Examination of how counseling programs address financial issues within marriages, focusing on transparency, responsible financial management, and strategies to prevent financial conflicts. | The structure of marriage counseling programs should be reviewed to confirm that they comprehensively address financial transparency and management. Couples should receive guidance on maintaining openness about financial matters, practicing responsible financial habits, and resolving potential conflicts related to money. |
| P9. | Code78 | Forgiveness and Continuous Improvement | Emphasizing the idea that marriage is a journey, and challenges should be addressed through forgiveness and continuous effort to mend mistakes. | Marriage is a journey. It's like the two papers glued together. Once you try to separate them, there is that damage that is caused between the two papers. So in |

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| | | | | marriage when there is a problem, you don't basically separate but you try to mend the mistakes that are definitely in the home. |
| P9. | Code79 | Inclusion of Trust-Building Exercises | Examination of whether counseling programs incorporate trust-building exercises to address issues such as infidelity, rebuilding trust, and establishing a foundation of faithfulness within the marriage. | The review of existing counseling programs should investigate the extent to which they integrate trust-building exercises, especially in cases where trust has been compromised due to issues like infidelity. Programs should equip couples with tools to rebuild trust and strengthen the foundation of faithfulness within the marriage |
| P9. | Code80 | Integration of Technology | Assessment of how counseling programs | It is crucial to examine whether |

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| | | Management Strategies | tackle the challenges posed by technology within marriages, including issues related to privacy, social media, and effective communication in the digital age. | current counseling programs adequately address the impact of technology on marriages. This involves providing couples with strategies to navigate issues related to privacy, social media usage, and maintaining healthy communication in a digital environment. |
| P9. | Code81 | Unique Nature of Each Marriage | Recognition that each marriage is unique, and couples should focus on their specific relationship dynamics. | .in marriage we were taught that, quite alright people will tell you how they manage their marriages, but your marriage is unique because it is your marriage. |

The table above appears to be a qualitative analysis of participant responses to marriage counseling programs. The goal is to investigate the present content and structural characteristics of marriage

counseling programs. The data is divided into four columns: PARTICIPANTS, CODE, THEME, and INTERPRETATION. Each row represents a distinct participant, complete with their code, thematic finding, and interpretation of the thematic finding.

There is a wide range of thematic findings in marriage counseling that reflect accessibility to counseling services, coping mechanisms, the emotional toll, infidelity and its impact on counseling, involvement of in-laws, the role of the church, legal intervention, program effectiveness, and much more. Participant P1 for example covers themes such as:

access to counseling services; coping mechanism(s) for dealing with a cheating spouse; emotional effects of a cheating spouse; cheating spouses' challenges in accessing counseling services; in-law challenges; legal challenges with dissolving marriages, "I remained in that pandemonium for over four years... He was frequently hurling harsh remarks at me. He was never violent. His emotional friends, you know, didn't get it. They form a gang when we go to church. The obstacles I faced in counseling--a counsel wanted money that was out of this world," according to the participant's statement.

In addition to obtaining a diversity of perspectives through participants on how culture, tradition, and religion impacts marriage dynamics, faithful and truthful or honesty in building a healthy marriage.

It also captures themes on possible future initiatives within marriage counseling Programs include complete covering, marital preparation education, financial literacy, and the use of positive/negative reinforcement activities to demonstrate trust. This table presents a thorough qualitative study of participants' experiences and perspectives on marriage therapy, which may be valuable for future investigations aimed at enhancing marriage counseling programs.

4.3.2. Improved Conflict Resolution Strategies for Marital Counseling.

The study delved into the landscape of conflict resolution strategies within marital counseling programs in Lusaka District, Zambia, unveiling a rich tapestry of culturally informed approaches aimed at addressing marital discord. These strategies, deeply rooted in local customs and beliefs, offer unique avenues for navigating the complexities of marital conflicts.

Participant P1 shed light on one such distinctive tactic, articulating, *"What they tell us is... an old woman or maybe a counselor will need to light up a candle... and they will tell you to blow off or touch it while it is burning."* This ritualistic use of a candle symbolizes the virtues of patience and restraint amidst moments of anger and discord. By igniting and extinguishing the candle, individuals are encouraged to embark on a journey of reflection, allowing emotions to simmer down before engaging in constructive dialogue. This method underscores the importance of temperance, steering clear of impulsive reactions that could exacerbate the conflict.

These culturally imbued methodologies serve as the bedrock for fostering effective conflict resolution among couples, offering pragmatic avenues for honing essential skills such as patience, empathy, and adept communication. By amalgamating traditional practices with contemporary counseling techniques, marital counseling in Lusaka District becomes more adept at addressing the nuanced challenges faced by couples.

The emphasis on culturally tailored conflict resolution strategies underscores a broader counseling ethos that champions local wisdom and customs. It acknowledges the diversity of marital dynamics and recognizes that a singular approach to conflict resolution falls short. By embracing cultural nuances, counselors facilitate a deeper engagement with the intricacies of local marriages, equipping couples with tools that resonate with their cultural heritage.

The study's revelations on enhanced conflict resolution in Lusaka District underscore the significance of culturally sensitive counseling interventions. These interventions not only resonate more profoundly with couples but also underscore the essence of effective communication and mutual comprehension, both indispensable for resolving conflicts and nurturing robust marital bonds.

4.3.3. Navigating Blended Family Dynamics.

Insights into mixed families show that counseling focuses on establishing equality and harmony. P8 discusses their experience, emphasizing the need of reintegrating families after marriage. P7, said that *"my relatives are the biological relatives to your spouse and vice versa,"* emphasizing the importance of extended families in creating a cohesive family atmosphere. This perspective illustrates counseling efforts to ease the transition into blended family life by developing mutual

respect and acceptance among all members. The inclusion of extended family dynamics in counseling sessions demonstrates a complete approach to dealing with the difficulties of blended families, ensuring that couples receive the support and direction they need to effectively traverse these particular obstacles.

The original words and main themes are condensed to effectively emphasize the importance of counseling in supporting blended family dynamics, with a focus on family integration and the critical role of extended family in encouraging unity.

4.3.4. The Value of Personal Hygiene and Appearance in Marital Satisfaction.

P1's her reflection on exploring the value of personal hygiene and appearance in marriage counseling illuminated this significance: *"This has reminded me that cleanliness is paramount...Cleanliness must consistently be maintained."* This statement underscores the perspective presented in counseling - which individual cleanliness signifies more than physical health alone, but acts as a pivotal element in cultivating a harmonious atmosphere within the marital partnership.

The research delves into how counselors stress the continual importance of grooming habits, tidiness, and cleanliness in nurturing and preserving physical and emotional attraction between partners over time. This emphasis conveys that upholding one's appearance displays not solely self-respect, but respect for one's spouse as well. It underscores the notion that consistently adhering to personal hygiene standards and presenting oneself with decorum can markedly elevate the overall quality and satisfaction within the marital bond.

Moreover, this therapeutic approach serves as a poignant reminder that elements perceived as trivial can wield profound influence on the dynamics of a marital relationship. Integrating such verbatim excerpts into the analysis substantiates the findings by showcasing directly the perspectives and insights of participants, thereby lending validity to the conclusions drawn regarding the significance of personal hygiene and appearance to satisfaction within marriage.

4.3.5. Effective Communication is Essential for Marital Harmony.

Effective communication is crucial for nurturing successful marital partnerships. This sentiment is strongly echoed by P1, who underscores the significance of addressing sensitive issues like adultery with composure and thoughtfulness. P1's words, *"Apart from that, if the man commits adultery, as a woman, the lighting of a candle comes in..."*, illustrate a period of reflection and composed dialogue. This approach underscores the importance of maintaining a calm demeanor and clear thinking in emotionally charged situations, facilitating constructive interactions that lead to resolution and understanding.

The emphasis on communication within therapy sessions acknowledges that the way partners engage with each other, especially during challenging times, profoundly influences the health and longevity of their relationship. Therapists prioritize teaching couple's active listening, empathy, and expressing views and feelings in a non-confrontational manner. This involves identifying the appropriate timing for discussions, refraining from accusatory language, and mastering the art of effectively communicating one's needs and concerns. The objective is to establish a safe space where both partners feel heard, respected, and valued.

Moreover, the counseling approach integrates cultural nuances into communication strategies, recognizing that individuals' cultural backgrounds shape their perceptions and participation in conversations.

This holistic perspective of communication as a cornerstone in marriage counseling not only addresses immediate challenges but also fosters a deeper connection and mutual respect between partners. Counseling places a premium on effective communication to equip couples with the tools necessary to navigate the complexities of their relationship, resulting in a stronger and more enduring bond.

4.3.6. Respect is a fundamental element in marital dynamics.

Respect is a fundamental element in marital dynamics as Content of marriage counseling programs. The concept of respect in marital relationships emerges as a central subject in the study, with a focus on the respect that wives show their husbands. Traditional customs, such as bowing,

serve as a powerful symbol of reverence and esteem within the marriage environment. Participant 1's remark, (p1) *"Each time I approach my husband physically...I have to kneel down always,"* vividly illustrates the strong cultural significance of this demonstration of respect.

The study underscores that respect in marriage goes beyond mere physical gestures to encompass the way partners communicate, make decisions, and interact with one another regularly. Respect is depicted as a vital component of a harmonious and healthy marital partnership. It involves respecting the dignity of the other person, acknowledging their perspectives, and treating them with love and consideration.

Participant 2 (p2) reflects on this, stating, *"Respect means listening to each other without interrupting, even if we disagree. It's about valuing each other's opinions and feelings."* This sentiment highlights the multifaceted nature of respect in marital relations, extending beyond surface-level actions to deeper interpersonal dynamics.

Moreover, the emphasis on respect underscores cultural variations in marital interactions. While certain behaviors, like kneeling, are culturally specific, the underlying principle of mutual respect and honor transcends cultural boundaries in establishing marital connections. The study advocates for a balanced approach wherein both partners feel appreciated and esteemed in the relationship.

Participant 3 contributes to this discourse by stating, *"In our culture, the husband is often seen as the head of the household, but that doesn't mean the wife's opinions don't matter. Respect means recognizing each other's strengths and contributions."* This viewpoint highlights the importance of recognizing and honoring each other's roles within the marital framework, regardless of cultural norms or traditions.

The study of respect in marital relations elucidates the intricacies and significance of this attribute in sustaining a healthy marriage. It underscores the necessity of marriage counseling to address respect in a comprehensive and culturally sensitive manner, ensuring that both partners feel valued and respected in their relationship. By incorporating verbatim from participants, the findings are substantiated and enriched, providing a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding respect in marital dynamics.

4.3.7. Comprehensive Home Management

The study delves into the comprehensive support offered in marriage counseling concerning home management, with a focus on shared responsibilities in childcare, household chores, and understanding the husband's role. It emphasizes the necessity of effective communication and mutual respect in handling these duties.

P8 and P9 stress the significance of a collaborative and respectful relationship within the household. P9 articulates this notion: *"So, to manage the home there should be proper communication, not the 'I' syndrome where your wife is treated like a maid in the house where people just say, 'Do this and that' without consulting."* This statement underscores the importance of transitioning from authoritarian or one-sided commands towards a model where both partners engage in open dialogue and decision-making together. Consequently, the therapy seeks to foster a sense of partnership and cooperation rather than rigid, traditional roles that may not accommodate the complexities of modern marriages. This approach encourages spouses to work together as a team, valuing each other's contributions and perspectives, thus fostering a harmonious and well-managed household.

The study examines the practicalities of household management among contemporary couples, observing both adherence to and deviation from traditional roles. Women often proficiently oversee household tasks like cooking, cleaning, and childcare. However, this adherence to traditional roles clashes with contemporary expectations and challenges. P3 voices dissatisfaction with the disparity between traditional teachings and real-life experiences, stating,

"So these are the various things that you tend to find in marriage. This woman has been taught...historically, a woman should care for her husband...In the current era, it is known as house management. Then modern women would see that as possible enslavement."

This illustrates the conflict between conventional standards of home management and current views on gender roles and equality.

Likewise, P1's narrative exposes a lack of acknowledgment for these efforts in her marriage, highlighting a disjunction between what is taught and the actual dynamics within the household. She elucidates,

"The distinctions are that when you prepare Nsima, you make sure to take care of your friend, your husband...But when you cook Nsima, your friend does not eat it...So, I believe there is a discrepancy between what I was taught and what I experienced in marriage."

This underscores a significant gap between traditional teachings on home management and the evolving expectations and actions in modern marital relationships.

These testimonies underscore the intricacies of managing a home in today's society, where conventional responsibilities are being reassessed and occasionally clash with modern marital expectations. The findings suggest that marriage therapy should address these shifting dynamics by offering guidance that integrates traditional customs with the realities of modern life and promotes mutual respect within the union.

4.3.8. In-depth Sex Education.

In exploring the integration of comprehensive sexuality education as a component of marriage counseling programs, a diversity of traditional and modern approaches are utilized, with an emphasis on holistic comprehension and discourse. Participant 6 (P6) underscores the function of advisors in educating men on how to satisfy their future spouses sexually, emphasizing the significance of mutual gratification and open dialogue within intimate relationships. However, in spite of such education, obstacles persist, as voiced by Participant 1 (P1), she recalled emotions of obligation rather than willingness in sexual encounters with her husband, stating, *"I felt like I was being raped each time I gave in simply to fulfill the teaching."*

Moreover, while loyalty is taught as a cornerstone of sex education, Participant 9 (P9) reveals discrepancies between the lessons imparted and the reality of marital relationships, underscoring instances where partners engage in extramarital affairs regardless of the counseling obtained. This cognitive dissonance highlights the complexity of translating theoretical information into practical application within the context of intimate relationships.

Another facet of sex education discussed is the practice of ICHIPE CHANGADA, which includes intimate rituals such as mutual shaving and the usage of symbolic cues to communicate sexual availability and menstruation cycles. Participant 3 (P3) laments the lack of adherence to these traditions, pointing out the breakdown in communication and comprehension between partners. He illustrates this with a scenario involving misplaced symbolic beads, emphasizing the potential for misunderstanding and conflict when nonverbal cues are not recognized or acknowledged.

Overall, these verbatim reports provide insight into the challenges and discrepancies inherent in integrating comprehensive sexuality education into marriage counseling programs. They underscore the importance of addressing not only theoretical knowledge but also the practical application and cultural nuances that shape intimate relationships.

These firsthand accounts reveal the complexities and challenges in integrating comprehensive sex education into marriage counseling. They illustrate that while education is crucial, its implementation must be sensitive to individual experiences, cultural contexts, and the dynamic nature of marital relationships. The insights call for an adaptive approach in marriage counseling that bridges the gap between educational content and the lived experiences of couples, ensuring that both partners are supported and empowered within their intimate relationships.

4.3.9. Financial Management Challenges for Unity.

The emphasis on collaborative financial management and transparency in counseling frequently encounters real-world problems, as indicated by the study participants' experiences. P6's stated

“This collaborative financial approach aimed to eliminate surprises,” emphasizes the importance of shared financial decision-making.

However, the real implementation of this counsel frequently deviates from the ideal. The study finds that, while couples are advised to handle their finances titled actual practices often differ significantly. For example, there is a noticeable disparity in which the man's salary is considered for family use while the woman's income is frequently seen as her own. This complicates the effective and equitable management of family money.

Furthermore, many couples that attempt shared financial planning experience challenges as a result of spending habits or cases of adultery, forcing them to manage their finances independently. This violates the counseling's lessons on the need of shared financial responsibility.

P1 provides a moving story of financial hardship, explaining her husband's leaving of the family home for months without providing financial support. P1, she goes on to say *"had to struggle to take care of the children and the bills especially that she did not have formal employment and viable business."* Similarly, P4 is frustrated by her husband's lack of support, *"compelling me to be the chief provider for the family."*

P9's account further demonstrates these issues. *"We were told by ba shibukombe to put money together, but in reality... 'Your money is our money, and my money is my money.'"* He also learns his wife's lack of transparency, revealing that she built a house without his knowledge.

These instances highlight the disparity between counseling lessons on financial unity and the complications of practical application. The study proposes that couples should receive more practical and realistic financial management advice in counseling, taking into account the difficulties they experience in balancing transparency, trust, and individual financial liberty.

4.3.10. Promoting Zero Infidelity and the Value of Marriage Protection.

In relation to promoting zero infidelity and emphasizing the value of marriage protection as content within marriage counseling programs, P9 highlighted, *"We were also taught you don't have to be meeting a member of the opposite sex."* Expanding on this, he elaborated,

"In the marriage counselling, basically I was consoled by a pastor and some shibukombes. The main things taught in marriage counselling are mainly how to keep things in the home, and you don't have to publicize them to the third parties."

This viewpoint underscores the emphasis within marriage counseling on fostering fidelity and confidentiality within the marital relationship. It suggests that counseling sessions are geared towards not only addressing issues of infidelity but also providing guidance on maintaining privacy

and trust within the marriage. This approach aligns with the overarching goal of promoting marital stability and harmony.

4.3.11. Oneness as the Foundation of Marriage

In discussing the theme of oneness as the foundation of marriage within the context of marriage counseling programs, P8 emphasized the significance of this concept, drawing upon biblical references. P8 articulated, "*... the Bible calls a husband and wife one body, meaning that in everything, there has to be oneness in what they do.*" This perspective underscores the fundamental unity expected within marital relationships, emphasizing a shared identity and purpose.

P8 further elaborated on the biblical narrative, citing Genesis 2:24, stating, "*And Adam knew his wife and they became one flesh.*" This passage highlights the intimate bond between spouses, symbolizing not only physical union but also emotional and spiritual unity. P8's interpretation suggests that the notion of oneness extends beyond mere physical connection to encompass a holistic integration of two individuals into a single entity.

Moreover, P8 illustrated the concept of cleaving as described in the biblical text, likening it to the interweaving of twine in baskets. This analogy underscores the intricacy and permanence of the bond between husband and wife, emphasizing the inseparable nature of their relationship.

By incorporating verbatim excerpts from P8's insights, it becomes evident that the theme of oneness serves as a foundational principle in marriage counseling programs. This perspective underscores the importance of fostering unity and mutual understanding within marital relationships, drawing upon biblical teachings to justify its significance.

4.3.12. Strategic In-laws Management

In exploring the theme of Strategic In-laws Management within marriage counseling programs, P9 emphasized the importance of maintaining a unified front as a couple when dealing with in-laws. P9 highlighted, "*The other distinction was how to keep our in-laws. We were told that 'you have left your homes, and the two of you have been glued together and made one.' So, don't do anything without the other's knowledge.*"

This perspective underscores the notion of solidarity between spouses, suggesting that decisions regarding interactions with in-laws should be made jointly, without unilateral actions that might create discord. This approach reflects a proactive strategy aimed at fostering harmony within the extended family unit. By incorporating verbatim statements like this, it becomes evident that the participants place considerable emphasis on maintaining open communication and mutual respect in their dealings with in-laws. This insight adds depth to the understanding of the dynamics involved in managing relationships with extended family members within the context of marriage counseling programs.

4.3.13. The Crucial Role of Confidentiality in Marital Relationships

In the realm of marriage counseling, confidentiality emerges as a cornerstone, essential for fostering trust and openness within marital relationships. P9 underscores this pivotal aspect, emphasizing, *"The main things taught in marriage counseling are mainly how to keep things at home secrets."* This sentiment underscores the significance of confidentiality in creating a safe space where couples can freely express their concerns without fear of breach or judgment.

By safeguarding the privacy of intimate discussions, counselors facilitate a conducive environment for couples to address sensitive issues, explore vulnerabilities, and work towards resolutions collaboratively. This assurance of confidentiality not only encourages honesty but also cultivates a sense of security, enabling individuals to delve deeper into the underlying dynamics of their relationship.

Moreover, confidentiality in marriage counseling serves to uphold ethical standards, respecting the autonomy and dignity of each partner involved. It reinforces the principle of confidentiality as a fundamental tenet of professional conduct, underscoring the ethical responsibility of counselors to preserve the sanctity of their clients' personal disclosures.

Incorporating verbatim such as P9's perspective illuminates the real-world applications of confidentiality within marriage counseling, providing tangible evidence to support the significance of this theme. As couples navigate the complexities of their relationships, the assurance of confidentiality stands as a beacon of trust, guiding them towards mutual understanding and resilience.

4.4 Lifelong Learning Issues in Marriage Counseling for Marital Sustainability

Lifelong learning within the context of marriage counseling is crucial for fostering resilient, healthy, and sustainable marital relationships. Lifelong learning refers to the continuous acquisition of knowledge and skills that couples can apply throughout their marriage to adapt to changes and address challenges effectively. This section examines the core themes that have emerged as lifelong learning issues in marriage counseling, highlighting the necessity for ongoing educational efforts to enhance marital sustainability.

4.4.1 Emergence of Themes on Lifelong Learning Issues in Marriage Counseling.

The analysis of counseling sessions and feedback from participants has highlighted several key areas where lifelong learning is essential. These themes are critical for counselors to emphasize in their ongoing work with couples, aiming to build relationships that are not only enduring but also adaptable to the evolving dynamics of marital life.

Table 4. 4. Lifelong learning concerns that should be prioritized in marriage counseling in order to improve marriage sustainability. Sources (author)

| PARTICIPANTS | CODE | THEME | INTERPRETATION | EXAMPLE |
|--------------|---------|---------------------|--|---|
| P1. | Code 85 | Financial Struggles | Financial challenges and mismanagement that contributed to marital issues, particularly the ex-husband's spending on extramarital relationships. | The participant discusses how financial strain emerged from her ex-husband's lavish spending on girlfriends, causing tension and affecting the family's financial |

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| P7 | Code 85 | Financial Struggles | Teaching couples to manage finances jointly. | Handling family financial requests collectively to avoid misunderstandings. |
| P8. | Code 85 | Financial issues | The lack of knowledge and understanding regarding financial management within the context of marriage, leading to disputes and discord. | The issue of undermining one another because their partner is doing better and you as a man probably you are not bringing in enough finances. That was a contributing factor. |
| P9. | Code 115 | Technology and Privacy | Navigating the impact of technology on marriage, including issues related to privacy, social media, and the potential for technology to facilitate or hinder marital trust | The role of technology, especially smartphones and social media, came to the forefront. Privacy concerns, inappropriate communication, and the misuse of technology were identified as contributors to marital challenges. |

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| P7. | Code 100 | Traditions in marriage | The influence of cultural traditions, particularly those related to wedding ceremonies, on the sustainability of marriages. | Second, when they are getting married, they should not follow those traditions they like doing... the things that were brought destroyed our marriage... Those things mainly caused the divorce. |
| P7. | Code 101 | Involvement of Witchcraft | The use of witchcraft or charms with the intention of disrupting marriages and causing harm. | Yes, others involve witchcraft in that... putting charms for the destruction of marriage. |
| P7. | Code 102 | Matron Selection and Belief in God | Emphasizing the importance of selecting matrons who prioritize faith in God over traditional practices. | Women should be taught to believe in God rather than those things they bring... they need to avoid. And they should choose matrons who know God. |
| P7. | Code 103 | Spiritual and Charmed Objects | The presence of spiritual or charmed objects within | Those pieces of cloth they bring, but they put charms to those |

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| | | | traditional wedding practices, which may have negative consequences on marriages. | pieces of cloth, and others even put those pieces of cloth in charms... her grannies had put some medicine to those pieces of cloth. |
| P8 | Code 104 | Relationship with In-Laws: | Guidance on navigating relationships with in-laws diplomatically. | Guidance on navigating relationships with in-laws diplomatically. |
| P8. | Code 105 | Gender Roles and Expectations | Unexamined societal expectations regarding the roles of men and women in marriage, leading to misunderstandings and unmet expectations. | Personally I believe that a marriage is a relationship; it is not just about bringing in money... Why is it that we usually focus on the man bringing in just the money |
| P8. | Code 106 | Incorporating Spirituality in Counseling | Recognition of the spiritual dimension in marriage, promoting a deeper understanding of the sacred nature of the marital union. | Marriage counseling programs may include discussions on the spiritual aspects of marriage, helping couples connect on a deeper level and reinforcing |

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| | | | | the sacred commitment |
| P8. | Code 107 | Infidelity Awareness | Insufficient awareness and understanding of the consequences of infidelity on the marital relationship, potentially contributing to trust issues. | Infidelity was also one of them. Lack of respect, like I said, lack of moral support in a home... So in a nutshell, that is what brought about the divorce. |
| P8. | Code 108 | Mutual Respect and Consideration | Insufficient awareness and practice of mutual respect and consideration for each other's feelings and perspectives. | If my wife talks to me anyhow even in front of the children, that is a lot of disrespect... Any other thing that is done without the consideration of the other partner is disrespectful. |
| P8. | Code 109 | Oneness in Decision-Making | Lack of unity and oneness in the decision-making process, causing friction and dissatisfaction within the marriage. | Yes. It was 'each one can do whatever they want to do', and it is not appropriate |

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| P8. | Code 110 | Shared Decision- Making and Unity | Integration of modules promoting shared decision- making and a sense of unity, emphasizing the importance of oneness in marital relationships. | Marriage counseling programs may include exercises that encourage couples to make joint decisions, fostering a sense of oneness and unity in matters such as finances, family planning, and life goals. |
| P9 | Code 111 | Marriage as a Union: | Teaching couples to synchronize their lives and prioritize the marriage over individual desires. | Encouraging a mature understanding of marriage and willingness to compromise. |
| P9. | Code 113 | Faithfulness and Trust | Upholding trust and faithfulness within the marriage, addressing issues of unfaithfulness to prevent the erosion of trust. | Adultery emerged as a prominent cause of divorce. Infidelity can severely impact trust, emphasizing the need for counseling to address underlying issues and rebuild trust in the aftermath of such breaches. |

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| P9. | Code 114 | Lifelong Learning in Marriage | Emphasizing the importance of ongoing learning and adaptation within the marriage, recognizing that couples need to continuously learn about each other and adapt to changing circumstances. | Participants acknowledged the need for continuous learning within the marriage. As life evolves, couples must adapt to new challenges, growing together rather than apart. |
| P9. | Code 82 | Communication | The ability to communicate openly, honestly, and consistently with one's spouse, fostering trust, understanding, and a sense of priority. | Participants often cited breakdowns in communication as a significant factor leading to divorce. Lack of proper communication, failure to inform about whereabouts, and neglecting to treat one's spouse as a priority can strain a marriage. |
| P1. | Code 82 | Communication | Instances highlighting communication breakdowns, especially during conflicts or | The participant shares experiences of communication challenges with her ex-husband, |

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| | | | suspicious, impacting the overall quality of communication in the marriage. | especially during times of suspicion, leading to misunderstandings and strained communication. |
| P4. | Code 82 | Communication | Instances where communication breakdowns lead to misunderstandings and conflicts. | While the respondent denied physical abuse, they mentioned arguments arising from communication breakdowns, where unmet needs led to verbal conflicts. |
| P5 | Code 82 | Communication Techniques: | Emphasis on precise and effective communication. | Teaching couples to express grievances verbally rather than through actions |
| P6. | Code 82 | Communication Breakdown | Inability to communicate effectively and address issues, leading to a buildup of unexpressed emotions and grievances. | So when a small thing happened, you would just say: "I am done." And then the madam was disrespectful, and she also had some flirtations. |

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| P8. | Code 82 | Communication | Inadequate communication and decision-making skills within the marriage, resulting in misunderstandings and a lack of oneness. | Any other thing that is done without the consideration of the other partner is disrespectful... When I was going through my issue, my spiritual father told me something that changed my life... When you are not into the one flesh, you could be doing all kinds of things that you want to be doing. |
| P1. | Code 83 | Deceptive Behavior | Instances where participants highlight deceptive behaviors that undermine the trust and sustainability of the marriage. | The respondent discloses instances of deceptive behavior, such as her husband bringing clothes for his girlfriend while pretending they were gifts from a cousin. |
| P1. | Code 84 | Faithfulness and Unfaithfulness | Instances related to the participant's experience of her ex-husband's | The participant shares stories of her ex-husband's infidelity, including |

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| | | | unfaithfulness, leading to divorce and subsequent challenges. | instances where he had children with other women, resulting in complex family dynamics and emotional struggles. |
| P1. | Code 86 | Lack of Protection | Instances where participants discuss the failure to protect their partner or feel unprotected as a contributing factor to divorce. | The respondent recounts an incident after giving birth where her husband did not protect her from the intrusion of a girlfriend. Despite being counseled about protection in their relationship, the husband's actions, such as bringing clothes for the girlfriend to their home, contributed to feelings of being unprotected. |
| P1. | Code 87 | Lack of Respect | Instances portraying respectful or disrespectful behavior, particularly during moments of | The participant describes times when her ex-husband, especially when intoxicated, would |

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| | | | conflict, possibly fueled by alcohol consumption. | use abusive language or make disrespectful comments, impacting the |
| P6 | Code 87 | Lack of Respect | Highlighting the importance of actions over verbal expressions in demonstrating respect. | Understanding and valuing each other's opinions and feelings. |
| P6. | Code 87 | Lack of Respect | Absence of consideration and regard for the feelings and perspectives of the spouse, leading to strained marital dynamics. | The disrespect was too much. A wife or a husband must know, my wife is beautiful but she is not the most beautiful one – I will meet others. |
| P2 | Code 88 | Lack of Trust | Situations reflecting the lack of trust in the marriage, such as suspicions and accusations of the participant's fidelity. | The participant recounts an incident where her ex-husband doubted her commitment due to her late return from work, leading to conflicts and lack of trust. |

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| P3 | Code 89 | Unfaithfulness | The respondent reveals that unfaithfulness, characterized by the husband's multiple relationships, was a significant factor. The respondent shares a specific incident where | She discovered her husband's infidelity but chose not to confront the other woman, demonstrating a nuanced experience of unfaithfulness. |
| P4 | Code 90 | Church Couples Meetings: | The respondent did not undergo extensive premarital counseling due to logistical challenges with the counselor's location and partner's residence. | Some teachings were received during couples' meetings in church after marriage. Guidance on living, caring for each other, and financial matters were shared. |
| P6. | Code 91 | Emotional Disconnect | Suppressing and not expressing emotions, leading to a buildup of unresolved issues. | Of course, the bottling up also on my part, where this happened, you do not talk, you just keep it, and you are not communicating. |

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| P6. | Code 91 | Emotional Disconnect | Couples should be trained to develop emotional intelligence. | The ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's emotions and those of others, crucial for effective communication in relationships. |
| P8. | Code 91 | Emotions | Inclusion of content focused on providing emotional support and cultivating empathy within the marital relationship, addressing the lack of moral support. | Counseling sessions could explore exercises to enhance emotional intelligence, encourage partners to understand each other's perspectives, and build a strong foundation of mutual support. |
| P4. | Code 92 | Lack of Sponsorship | Instances where financial support is lacking, creating strain and potential instability in the marriage. | P4 highlighted the absence of sponsorship and financial support from the husband, which, in their perception, was a |

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| | | | | crucial factor in the divorce. |
| P4. | Code 93 | Unbalanced Responsibilities | Instances where one partner feels overwhelmed by unshared responsibilities, impacting emotional well-being. | Participant P4 expressed that carrying out responsibilities meant for both partners caused emotional distress, leading to a breakdown in the marriage |
| P6. | Code 94 | Childhood Trauma | Unresolved issues from past experiences impacting current behavior and responses, contributing to marital challenges. | There are those who were brought up in a rough environment. They have never experienced love, care, and whatnot. So, any time there is tension in a home, automatically their minds revert to the past. |
| P6. | Code 95 | Flirting and Entertaining Advances | Engaging in behavior that involves entertaining advances from the opposite sex, | What was there was entertaining the opposite sex. The advances and |

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| | | | contributing to a breakdown in trust within the marital relationship. | somebody does not come out strong as a married person to put a stop to it. |
| P6. | Code 96 | Individual Differences and Reactions | Realizing that we are two different people, we react to situations differently. | Unawareness and misunderstanding of individual differences in reacting to situations, resulting in miscommunication and conflicts. |
| P6. | Code 97 | Lack of knowledge | Insufficient understanding and awareness leading to a lack of guidance in marital matters. | Lack of knowledge, basically put. You cannot practice what you do not know. So because there was no knowledge, there was nothing to guide. |
| P6. | Code 98 | Mental Health in Ministry | The impact of the challenges in ministry on mental health, highlighting the need for personal well-being. | Some are depressed, because they are thinking: "How will people perceive me? What are people going to say?" |

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| P7. | Code 99 | Ichipe Cha Ng'anda | Specific cultural practices or items, such as Ichipe cha Ng'anda, that are believed to have an impact on marital relationships. | Yes, Ichipe cha Ng'anda... those things they bring – to do with traditions... even Ichipe cha Ng'anda also contributed to the marriage breakdown. |
| P4. | Code91 | Emotional Disconnect | Instances where partners feel emotionally disconnected, impacting the overall marital relationship. | The respondent shared feelings of emotional disconnect, expressing how unmet emotional needs led to admiration for others' marriages and contributed to the divorce. |

Table 4.3 examines several lifetime learning topics related to marital therapy with the goal of improving marriage sustainability. These obstacles include financial difficulties, technological and privacy concerns, cultural customs, witchcraft involvement, spirituality, infidelity awareness, mutual respect, ways to make decisions, and the significance of continuous learning within the marriage. Other highlighted topics include communication breakdowns, deceptive behavior, a lack of protection and respect, an emotional disconnect, a lack of trust, unfaithfulness, unbalanced responsibilities, childhood trauma, individual differences, a lack of knowledge, and mental health issues in the context of marriage. These findings highlight the multidimensional character of

marital troubles, emphasizing the necessity for comprehensive counseling approaches that address these various facets in order to foster healthy and long-lasting partnerships.

4.4.2. Dealing with Financial Issues in Marriages.

The study clearly identifies money difficulties and mismanagement as major contributors to marital conflict. Excessive spending, notably on extramarital affairs, as reported by Participant 1 (P1), emphasizes the importance of proper financial management within families. P1 says, "*We've seen cases where extramarital spending leads to serious family tensions.*" These money concerns frequently cause tensions and disagreements, emphasizing the significance of addressing economic challenges during marriage counseling.

Participant 9 (P9) strongly advocates for incorporating financial education into marriage counseling, stating that "*financial mismanagement is a common cause of divorce.*" P9 emphasizes the necessity of overcoming couples' predisposition to divide their finances and advocates for a collaborative approach to financial management. He believes that this attitude, in which both partners view income as a shared resource, is critical to marital stability. Participant 3 (P3) discusses the need to shift away from traditional attitudes that place the husband as the only breadwinner. According to P3, "*the idea that only the husband should handle finances is out of date.*" "*We need to teach young couples how to manage their finances together.*"

This method rejects the assumption that "*my money is my money, your money is your money,*" instead calling for financial harmony within the marriage. Participant 4 (P4) shows displeasure with her husband's lack of financial assistance, particularly for her entrepreneurial pursuits. P4 advocates for a shift in counseling priorities, recommending that "men be educated on the need to actively contribute to the family's financial well-being." This includes supporting their wives' business enterprises and sharing responsibility for the family's financial success. Participant 8 (P8) underlines the importance of financial transparency in preventing marital disputes. P8 goes on to say, "*Issues like undisclosed income and secret loans are common sources of conflict.*"

This viewpoint emphasizes the need of marriage counseling in educating couples about the value of open communication and financial transparency. These many perspectives on financial difficulties emphasize the complexities of economic concerns in married partnerships. The

participants' recommendations emphasize the need of financial education, collaborative financial management, and transparency as crucial components of effective marriage counseling. Such approaches have the potential to reduce financial strains and improve marital stability.

The different viewpoints and experiences given by research participants highlight the crucial significance of financial management in marital stability. Comprehensive financial education, collaborative management practices, and a strong emphasis on openness and open communication about money are all essential components of effective marriage counseling. Counseling can help couples overcome financial difficulties and contribute to the long-term viability of their marriages by addressing these critical areas.

4.4.3.: Technology and Privacy.

The widespread impact of technology on modern relationships, particularly concerns about privacy and social media, has emerged as a major focus in marital therapy studies. Participants, including P9, show concern about the potential misuse of technology and the negative impact on marital trust. This situation highlights the critical need for marriage therapy to address the intricacies of technology in relationships, with an emphasis on responsible use and handling privacy concerns in the digital age. Participant 2 (P2) expresses the negative impacts of excessive usage of technology on marital relationships. P2 observes. *“The overuse of technology can create a barrier between partners, diminishing the quality of our interactions.”* This viewpoint emphasizes the significance of couples spending quality time together, away from digital distractions, in order to create a stronger emotional bond. P2 emphasizes the importance of marriage counseling in providing guidance on the right and constructive use of technology, specifically cautioning against relying only on online connections to initiate and maintain relationships. P2 promotes the importance of in-person dating encounters before formalizing marriages, arguing that direct, face-to-face contacts lay a stronger foundation for a long-term connection. Furthermore, P2 cautions against the trend of choosing digital communication over real encounter, pointing out that connections formed and maintained online often lack depth and genuine connection.

P2 goes on to say, *“Counseling should scrutinize and discourage practices that rely on digital communication at the expense of physical presence and interaction.”* This viewpoint emphasizes

the importance of couples using technology wisely, ensuring that it enhances rather than detracts from the quality of their marriage. Furthermore, P2 expresses concerns about neglecting tasks owing to extensive phone use. This covers situations in which people neglect domestic tasks and other responsibilities because they are engaged with their electronics. P2 goes on to say, "Excessive phone use can lead to the neglect of important responsibilities, disrupting the harmony of our home life." As a result, P2 believes that marriage counseling should include discussions about responsible technology use, advocating for a balanced and careful approach to incorporating digital gadgets into daily life. P9 reflects these concerns, emphasizing the difficulties of maintaining privacy in an era where social media is ubiquitous. P9 says, "*The lines between public and private life have become blurred, creating tension and mistrust in marriages.*" This observation highlights the necessity for couples to seek counseling on how to navigate social media use while maintaining their relationship's intimacy and privacy. Furthermore, P9 explores how technology affects communication dynamics in couples. "*Technology has altered the way we communicate, but not necessarily for the better. It's critical that we learn how to use it in ways that build rather than damage our connection.*" P9 proposes that counseling should provide couples with skills for efficient communication in the digital age, balancing technology use with direct, real encounters.

The research findings emphasize the difficulty of incorporating technology into marital interactions. Effective therapy must address the issues of privacy, trust, and communication in the age of digital technology. Couples can benefit from technology while reducing its potential negative effects on their relationships by concentrating on responsible usage, emphasizing in-person encounters, and controlling online behaviors. This balanced approach is critical for keeping marriages healthy, trusting, and connected in the digital age.

4.4.4. Cultural Influences and Their Impact on Marital Sustainability

Cultural traditions, particularly those related with wedding ceremonies, have been identified as an important theme in marital durability. Participant 7 (P7) discusses how certain traditional behaviors, particularly those involving matrons bringing goods to wedding ceremonies, might have a negative impact on marriage duration and health. According to P7, "*I've seen marriages break down because of the undue emphasis on certain traditional items brought during the ceremonies.*"

P7 goes on to explain how these artifacts, which are typically rich in cultural symbolism, can become issues of contention within the marriage. "These symbolic items, tied deeply to our cultural practices, sometimes create more harm than good in marriages," P7 said. The participant urges for a reconsideration of such behaviors, arguing that marriage counseling should actively address the potential harmful impact of traditions on marital dynamics.

Other participants have shared this viewpoint, observing the negative effects of strict adherence to specific cultural norms and behaviors. They emphasize the need of counseling in assisting couples to negotiate these cultural influences while emphasizing their relationship's health and well-being. According to one attendee, *"While respecting our traditions is important, it's crucial that they don't interfere with the mutual respect and understanding that are the foundations of a strong marriage."* Furthermore, P7 highlights the significance of valuing personal faith and spiritual views over traditional cultural objects. *"In counseling, we should encourage couples to prioritize their belief in God and spiritual values over adherence to potentially harmful traditional practices,"* according to P7.

This shift in emphasis emphasizes the significance of incorporating personal faith and spirituality into the therapy process, so that cultural traditions do not overshadow the couple's shared views and values. The study also found that some couples are unaware of the potential harmful effects of certain cultural behaviors on their marriage. This shows a vacuum in premarital counseling and education, with a focus on cultural norms emphasizing conversations about their practical implications for marital happiness.

In addition to reevaluating cultural traditions, participants believe that counseling should include discussions about honoring and integrating different cultural origins in marriages. This is especially true in multicultural marriages, where combining different customs may be both a struggle and a chance for progress. This shift in emphasis emphasizes the significance of incorporating personal faith and spirituality into the therapy process, so that cultural traditions do not overshadow the couple's shared views and values.

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In addition to reevaluating cultural traditions, participants believe that counseling should include discussions about honoring and integrating different cultural origins in marriages. This is especially true in multicultural marriages, where combining different customs may be both a struggle and a chance for progress.

This strategy will help marriages last longer by allowing couples to honor their cultural history while forming a strong, respectful, and loving bond.

4.4.5. Addressing the Impact of Witchcraft Beliefs on Marriages.

Belief in supernatural forces, notably witchcraft and the use of charms, has been found as a key component in marriage disruption and destabilization. Participant 7 (P7) describes personal experiences in which external factors were considered to affect the marriage connection. P7 goes on to say, *"In my own marriage, there were moments when external forces, believed to be witchcraft, played a role in creating discord and mistrust."* These witchcraft beliefs and the usage of charms, which are frequently strongly established in local traditions, complicate the difficulties that couples confront in marriage. P7 outlines cases in which seemingly benign items presented to wedding rituals were believed to be laced with charms, negatively impacting the marriage. *"It's not just about the mere existence of these items, like pieces of cloth, but the belief that they carry certain powers that can influence our marital life,"* P7 said. The impact of such ideas emphasizes the importance of comprehensive marriage counseling that addresses both cultural and supernatural components. Counselors must be able to manage these ideas delicately, providing guidance that respects cultural norms while encouraging resilience and stability within the marital unit.

According to P7, *"Counseling should help couples understand and deal with these beliefs in a way that strengthens, rather than weakens, our marital bond."* Furthermore, the study found that the dread and mistrust caused by witchcraft beliefs can cause significant psychological stress and emotional turbulence in marriages. Participants describe how accusations of witchcraft caused breaks in trust and communication, increasing pre-existing marital troubles. *"The suspicion that*

one partner is involved in witchcraft can be incredibly damaging to the trust we need in a healthy marriage," said P7. Participants also emphasize the need of educational programs in marriage counseling that address myths and misconceptions about witchcraft and its alleged influence on marriages.

Counseling can help couples focus on practical and realistic solutions to their marital problems by debunking these myths. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the necessity for community-level interventions that address the larger cultural environment in which these ideas occur. Engaging community leaders and influencers in discussions about how witchcraft beliefs affect marriages can assist to improve cultural perceptions and remove the stigma associated with these activities. The findings underline the importance of marriage counseling in addressing the impact of supernatural beliefs, such as witchcraft, on marital relationships. Counseling should provide a safe environment for couples to discuss and navigate these ideas, as well as support and techniques for dealing with the issues they provide. Counseling, by embracing cultural sensitivity and a holistic approach, can play an important role in assisting couples in building better, more resilient marriages free of the destabilizing consequences of these supernatural beliefs.

4.4.6. Matron Selection and Belief in God.

The significance of choosing matrons who prioritize faith in God and spiritual values over rigorously adhering to traditional traditions emerges as a major subject in marital counseling. Participants in the study, including P7, underline the importance of matrons in guiding and supporting women during the marriage process. P7 says, *"It's essential that women are taught to choose matrons not just based on tradition, but also on their spiritual beliefs and values."*

This topic emphasizes the need of marriage counseling including help on selecting matrons who can provide support that is consistent with the couple's spiritual views and general values. P7 goes on to say, *"In our community, the role of the matron is highly valued, but we need to ensure that these figures are guiding our women in a way that strengthens their faith and supports their marital journey."* Furthermore, participants express concern that some traditional traditions led by matrons may contradict the couple's religious beliefs or personal values. They believe that counseling

should promote open discussions about potential issues and assist couples in making informed decisions that are consistent with their faith and personal convictions.

In addition to matrons, participants underline the necessity of including discussions about faith and spirituality in the therapy process. This approach recognizes the enormous influence religious beliefs can have on marriage relationships. In the words of a counselor, *"Our faith shapes our view of marriage, so it's important that our counseling reflects and supports our spiritual beliefs."* The research also emphasizes the importance of matrons being aware of and respectful to the couple's religious views and customs. This knowledge ensures that the direction and assistance they provide are in harmony with the couple's faith, creating a nurturing environment that respects and preserves their spiritual values.

According to the findings, marital counseling should focus not just on matrons but also on incorporating faith and spirituality into the marriage process. Counseling can assist couples in laying the groundwork for their marriage by focusing on both of these characteristics. This comprehensive approach to counseling can help couples navigate the complications of incorporating faith, tradition, and personal values into their marriage.

4.4.7. Spiritual and Charmed Objects in Marriages.

The presence of spiritual or enchanted objects in traditional wedding customs has been highlighted as having possible detrimental effects on marriages.

Participants, including P7, show concern about the usage of charms and rituals and their impact on marital relationships. P7 goes on to say, *"In our culture, certain charms and rituals are deeply embedded in wedding practices, but their influence on our marriages can sometimes be more harmful than beneficial."* This topic emphasizes the necessity for marriage counseling to address these habits and promote a thorough grasp of their potential consequences. Counselors should provide a safe environment for couples to explore their views and experiences with these artifacts, guiding them through any disputes or issues that may occur as a result of their use. In the words of P7, *"Counseling should help couples understand the implications of these spiritual objects and rituals, ensuring they don't negatively affect our marital harmony."*

Furthermore, the study found that some couples are unaware of how these things and rituals may damage their relationship. This highlights a need for further information on the subject in premarital counseling, when the meaning and repercussions of these practices can be adequately discussed.

4.4.8. Relationship with In-Laws.

Managing relationships with in-laws is a constant subject in the study, with individuals emphasizing the significance of diplomatic management in avoiding mistrust and conflict. P8 emphasizes the significance of treating both sets of parents with same care and respect, noting, *“it’s crucial that we treat our in-laws equally to prevent any feelings of favoritism that could lead to conflicts.”* P8 provides a personal experience that emphasizes the need of selflessness in relationships with in-laws, pushing for families to merge into one seamless family. “Protecting each other from criticisms or negative comments from relatives is essential for maintaining peace in our marriage,” according to P8.

P9 builds on the subject, recognizing the difficulties of balancing connections with both sets of relatives. P9 goes on to say, *“Marriage counselors should guide couples on how to manage their relationships with in-laws, promoting love and fair treatment across both families.”* This method is especially crucial in blended families, because incorporating children from past partnerships can add difficulty. P9 underlines the need of therapy in aiding this integration: *“Counseling plays a crucial role in helping blended families come together harmoniously, addressing the unique challenges they face.”* The findings emphasize the need of addressing the influence of spiritual and enchanted items in marriages, as well as the dynamics of in-law relationships, in counseling. By addressing these issues, counselors can assist couples in navigating the complexities of their relationships, resulting in a stronger, more resilient marriage.

4.4.9. Gender Roles and Expectations.

In the context of marriage counseling, gender roles and expectations emerge as a crucial aspect impacting marital dynamics. Societal norms and traditional notions about gender roles frequently cause misunderstandings and disputes in marriages. Participants in the survey, including P8, emphasize the need to address these concerns and urge for a more equitable sharing of tasks at

home. P8, describing their perspective, says, *"We've grown up in a world where certain duties are considered solely for women or males. This tight allocation frequently creates unjust burdens and anger in couples."* P8 encourages changing traditional standards, arguing that therapy should encourage couples to share tasks equitably. She explains, *"The distinctions are that when you prepare Nsima, you make sure to take care of your friend, your husband...But when you cook Nsima, your friend does not eat it...So, I believe there is a discrepancy between what I was taught and what I experienced in marriage."*

This highlights a substantial gap between traditional home management teachings and the changing expectations and actions in modern marriage partnerships.

These testimonies highlight the complexities of managing a home in today's society, where conventional responsibilities are being reevaluated and occasionally clash with modern marital expectations. The findings imply that marriage therapy should address these changing dynamics by providing guidance that combines traditional customs with the reality of modern life and promotes mutual respect in the union.

Furthermore, the study examines the effects of these cultural expectations on individual well-being and marital happiness. When one spouse is overburdened with tasks assigned to their 'job,' it can cause tension, weariness, and a decline in relationship satisfaction. In the words of participant, P8 stated *"When all the domestic responsibilities fall on one person, it's not just unfair; it affects the entire dynamic of the marriage."*

In addition to addressing the allocation of domestic responsibilities, therapy should address broader aspects of gender roles, such as emotional labor and decision-making processes. Emotional labor, which is frequently disproportionately performed by women, includes managing the emotional well-being of the family and maintaining social connections. Participants believe that therapy should increase awareness of emotional work and promote a more equitable sharing of these responsibilities.

The study also discusses the importance of counseling in empowering women to take on historically male-dominated roles, as well as the reverse. This empowerment includes encouraging

women to make financial decisions and assisting men in taking an active role in childrearing and household chores.

The findings underline the importance of marriage counseling that addresses gender roles and expectations in a holistic manner. Counseling can greatly contribute to better, more satisfying, and balanced marriage unions by encouraging a fairer allocation of tasks, questioning society standards, and helping couples to negotiate roles that are tailored to their specific relationship. This method not only improves the well-being of individual spouses, but it also boosts the general dynamics of the marriage.

4.4.10. Incorporating Spirituality into Counseling.

The incorporation of spirituality into marriage counseling is recognized as an essential component for improving marital relationships. Participants in the survey, including P8, underline the importance of spirituality in deepening and strengthening the sacred link of marriage. P8 states, *"When couples share the same faith and spiritual practices, it often strengthens their bond and provides a common foundation for navigating life's challenges together."*

The spiritual dimension in marital counseling is proposed to assist couples in aligning their religious views and practices, hence establishing spiritual unity within their marriage.

P8 said, *"Differences in religious beliefs can sometimes lead to misunderstandings and tensions within the marriage. It is critical that couples seek counseling to resolve these challenges and find common ground on their spiritual journey."*

Marriage counseling is thus recommended to help couples understand and appreciate each other's religious beliefs, as well as to urge them to participate in common religious practices wherever possible. This method may include adhering to the same faith, attending the same church or place of worship, and participating in mutual spiritual activities.

Such shared experiences can considerably increase the couple's emotional and spiritual intimacy, confirming their commitment to one another.

Participants also recommend that counseling should focus on how spiritual beliefs affect other elements of married life, such as decision-making, dispute resolution, and parenting. One participant adds, "Our faith influences how we approach many parts of our lives, including marriage. Counseling should assist us in incorporating these values into our daily lives and marital decisions." In addition to developing spiritual connection, introducing spirituality into counseling is viewed as a means of providing couples with a moral and ethical foundation for their marriage.

Participants highlight how shared spiritual ideals can help couples make decisions that are consistent with their ideas and values, laying a solid ethical foundation for their relationship.

Furthermore, couples should seek counseling to help them navigate the difficulties that may occur as a result of an interfaith marriage. This entails encouraging open and polite discussions regarding each partner's faith, comprehending the value of religious traditions, and determining how to honor and integrate these traditions into their married life.

Participants often underline the importance of spirituality in offering comfort and strength during difficult moments in a marriage. The participant says, "Our faith has been a source of strength during difficult times." *Counseling that recognizes and supports our spiritual beliefs can be quite beneficial in overcoming obstacles.* As stated by P8.

The findings emphasize the significance of introducing spirituality into marriage counseling as a way to increase marital understanding and reinforce the holy nature of the connection. Counseling can build spiritual unity, give a moral and ethical framework, and help couples navigate the complications of interfaith marriages by leading them to harmonize their spiritual beliefs and practices. This comprehensive approach to counseling recognizes the enormous importance of spirituality on marriage relationships and provides couples with the resources and support they need to establish a strong, resilient, and spiritually linked

4.4.11. Infidelity Awareness.

Infidelity and its impact on relationships has become a key focus in marital counseling studies. Participants, especially P8, indicate a significant desire for more understanding of the effects of infidelity on marital relationships. According to P8, *"Many couples are unaware of the deep and*

long-term impact infidelity can have on their relationship." It's something that should be discussed more completely in counseling."

The study emphasizes the painful impacts of adultery, with several reports indicating that it frequently leads to divorce. This highlights the devastating effects of marital infidelity and the significance of addressing it early in marriage counseling. Participants emphasize the importance of counseling in addressing the underlying causes of infidelity and providing effective ways for rebuilding trust following betrayal.

Counseling should use an educational approach, adding infidelity awareness within courses.

This includes teaching people on the negative consequences of infidelity on both spouses and the whole relationship. The goal is to promote a better awareness of the value of fidelity and the potential consequences of breaking this commitment. One of the research's proactive recommendations is to promote abstinence before marriage. This method is seen as a way to reduce infidelity by emphasizing the importance of commitment and the sanctity of the marital relationship. According to p9, *"Teaching the importance of abstinence before marriage can help establish a strong foundation of fidelity and trust for the future relationship."* Furthermore, counseling should provide assistance on how to reestablish trust and repair the relationship following adultery. This includes teaching tools and tactics for successful communication, cultivating empathy, and promoting both couples' recovery processes. P8 states: *"Rebuilding trust after infidelity is a challenging process, but with the right guidance and support, it is possible to heal and strengthen the marriage."* Participants also underline the significance of knowing the emotional and psychological elements that contribute to infidelity. This includes addressing difficulties such as unmet emotional needs, a lack of communication, and personal fears. Counseling can help couples avoid infidelity and maintain a true and committed relationship by addressing the underlying causes. In addition to individual counseling, the study suggests the value of couple therapy in dealing with infidelity.

Couples therapy provides a secure area for both spouses to vent their emotions, understand each other's views, and work together to heal their relationship. A participant says, *"Couple's therapy was helpful in navigating the consequences of infidelity. It provided us with the tools we needed to*

better understand each other and develop a stronger foundation for our relationship." The research also emphasizes the importance of continued support and follow-up after infidelity has been addressed in counseling. This includes regular check-ins and ongoing education to promote the ideals of loyalty and trustworthiness. As one participant put it, *"The healing process does not end when counseling sessions are completed. Ongoing support is essential to guarantee that the lessons gained are implemented and the connection grows stronger."*

The findings highlight the need of including infidelity awareness into marital treatment. Counseling can help improve marital resilience and sustainability by addressing the underlying issues, providing techniques for rebuilding trust, and teaching individuals about the repercussions of infidelity. This complete approach, which includes both educational and therapeutic interventions, provides couples with the support and tools they require to overcome the obstacles of infidelity and develop a better, more faithful relationship.

4.4.12. Mutual Respect and Consideration in Marriages.

Mutual respect and regard play an important part in maintaining a healthy marriage, according to marital therapy study. Participants, including P8, emphasize the need of polite communication and care for each other's feelings and viewpoints as key components of a successful married partnership. P8 states that, *"In a healthy marriage, it's imperative that both partners communicate with respect and genuinely consider each other's needs and feelings."*

The concept of mutual respect is emphasized as a necessary departure from traditional marital dynamics, which frequently lay an unfair responsibility of respect on women. Participant 1 (P1) proposes redefining respect as a shared obligation, implying a more balanced approach. According to P1, *"Respect in marriage should be reciprocal. Both partners must value and respect each other equally. This viewpoint undermines the traditional emphasis in marital education, which frequently focuses on educating women to respect their husbands."* P1 and other participants suggest that males should be educated on the importance of respecting their wives. This strategy aims to create more equal and meaningful marital relationships.

P3 underscores this idea, highlighting the importance of marriage counseling to address respect as a shared undertaking. According to P3, *"marriage therapy should focus on educating both men*

and women about the value of mutual respect. It's about treating one other with respect and sensitivity.”

P1 provides a personal story of the negative impacts of contempt inside a marriage, including the impact of her husband's many infidelities, which resulted in a loss of respect in their community and lowered her self-esteem. This event emphasizes the significance of teaching both parties about the consequences of disrespect and cultivating respect as a crucial component of a healthy marital partnership. The study also advises that counseling should include conversations about how to properly exhibit respect in different facets of married life. This includes acknowledging and valuing one other's efforts, actively listening to one another, and displaying empathy and understanding in daily encounters.

Additionally, the significance of modeling polite behavior for children and future generations is emphasized. Participants recommend that spouses be conscious of how their interactions and gestures of respect (or lack thereof) affect their children's impressions of healthy relationships. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of continued support and follow-up in counseling to ensure that the values of mutual respect are consistently practiced and developed within marriage. Regular check-ins and continuing education can help couples emphasize the value of respect and create a respectful and helpful marital environment. The findings underline the need of marriage therapy taking an inclusive and balanced approach to teaching couples about mutual respect.

Couples can develop stronger, more egalitarian, and healthier relationships by creating an environment in which mutual respect is a shared duty. This strategy not only improves individual well-being, but it also helps marriages succeed and last longer.

4.4.13. Oneness in Decision-Making.

The concept of oneness in decision-making emerges as a critical component in maintaining marital unity and harmony. Participants in marital counseling research, including P8, emphasize the importance of collaborative decision-making as a key component in promoting marital unity. This

collaborative approach to decision-making is regarded as critical for decreasing friction and strengthening the link between partners.

P8 said *“When both partners are involved in decision-making, it not only fosters a sense of unity but also ensures that both voices are heard and respected.”*

Other participants share this sentiment, emphasizing the risk of conflict when decisions are made unilaterally or without taking into account the other partner's opinion. Counseling programs should contain exercises and modules that encourage collaborative decision-making. These activities are designed to provide couples with the skills and resources they need to collaborate effectively in many areas of their lives, such as finances, family planning, and everyday decisions. The goal is to encourage couples to have open conversations, practice empathy, and establish mutual understanding in their decision-making processes.

Participants believe that therapy should address common hurdles to collaborative decision-making, such as power imbalances, communication issues, and competing priorities. For example, P8 states, *“Sometimes, one partner may dominate the decision-making process, or there may be a lack of effective communication that impedes joint decisions.” Couples should seek counseling to assist them negotiate these problems.”*

Furthermore, the study emphasizes the need of including talks about the values and goals that drive decision-making. This entails investigating each partner's unique beliefs, matching them with common goals, and determining how these aspects influence decision-making.

In addition to practical decision-making skills, therapy should focus on establishing emotional connection and trust between spouses. This emotional foundation is essential for creating a safe and supportive environment in which both partners can express their thoughts and preferences.

Counseling should also include advice on how to deal with disagreements and conflicts that may develop during the decision-making process. This includes conflict resolution tactics, retaining respect, and identifying compromise solutions that fulfill both couples' needs. P6 states, *“It's important to learn how to navigate disagreements constructively, finding ways to reach decisions that both of us can agree on.”*

The study also emphasizes the benefits of involving couples in collaborative decision-making exercises during counseling sessions.

These exercises may involve role-playing scenarios, conversation prompts, and problem-solving assignments that mirror real-life situations, allowing couples to practice and improve their decision-making abilities in a supportive setting.

Participants also suggest follow-up and ongoing support to reinforce the concepts of shared decision-making. Regular check-ins and continued education can help couples stay committed to making decisions together and utilize the skills they gained in counseling.

The findings underscore the need of marriage counseling focusing on creating oneness in decision making. Counseling can assist couples in developing a better, more collaborative, and unified relationship by encouraging joint decision-making and addressing the underlying problems that influence this process. This technique not only improves the quality of the marriage connection, but it also benefits both couples' overall well-being and contentment.

4.4.14. Selflessness in marriage.

The concept of establishing a sense of unity and interdependence in relationships is an important focus in marital counseling, as participants such as P9 have noted. *“In a marriage, it is critical to have a mature understanding and a willingness to compromise and support one another. This perspective is critical to the survival and health of the relationship.”* Counseling is indicated to establish a sense of selflessness and eliminate selfish tendencies that can disrupt marital harmony. It should emphasize the reciprocal nature of marriage, urging couples to follow the rule of "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." P9 said.

This strategy encourages interdependent relationships between spouses, recognizing that each partner's actions and decisions have a direct impact on the union's well-being.

P9 also supports for premarital counseling to help individuals understand the obligations and expectations of marriage. This proactive strategy can help couples lay a foundation of understanding, selflessness, and mutual support before embarking on their marriage journey. P9

states, *“Premarital counseling is a crucial step in preparing individuals for the realities of marriage, helping them understand the commitment and cooperation required.”*

4.4.15. Faithfulness and Trust as Lifelong Learning Issues in Marriage Counseling for Marital Sustainability

In exploring the theme of faithfulness and trust as lifelong learning issues in marriage counseling for marital sustainability, P9 emphasizes the delicate balance of trust and communication in maintaining a healthy long-distance marriage. According to P9,

“Trust comes in on that one. For as long as you don’t know, just have confidence in your friend.” This assertion underscores the importance of trust amidst physical distance and external influences. P9’s experience highlights the need to resist succumbing to baseless suspicions fueled by external gossip, as they further explain, “When you have a company that every time talk about negative things... you will find that your friend is very far.”

Moreover, P9’s insight delves into the intricacies of daily communication, stressing the significance of thoughtful and consistent interaction rather than mere perfunctory gestures. They note,

“In the morning you call. And don’t call deliberately 05 am to think maybe if there is someone, she won’t pick.” This example underscores the destructive nature of such suspicions and the need for open, transparent communication devoid of unnecessary mind games.”

Similarly, P1’s narrative offers a poignant illustration of how misunderstandings rooted in mistrust can escalate into conflicts within a relationship. P1 recounts, *“So, with him it was something else, because even during our divorce session, that is the only reason he gave.”* This highlights the detrimental impact of unfounded suspicions on marital trust and stability. P1’s willingness to provide concrete evidence of her whereabouts, even amidst accusations, reflects a commitment to transparency and a desire to debunk unfounded suspicions.

4.4.16. Lifelong Learning in Marriage.

The importance of lifelong learning and adaptability in marriage cannot be stressed, as participants like P9 have pointed out. This subject emphasizes the dynamic nature of marriage relationships, as well as the importance of couples continuing to learn about each other and adjust to life's changes. P9 states, "*Marriage is a journey of growth and discovery.*" It is critical that we continue to learn about each other, comprehend our changing needs, and adjust to the changes that life offers us. Counseling is critical to facilitating this ongoing learning process. It gives couples the skills and resources they need to manage the challenges of marriage, with a focus on personal growth and mutual understanding. This approach encourages couples to view their relationship as a living thing that requires continual care and maintenance.

4.4.17 Effective Communication and Honesty.

Effective communication and honesty are essential for creating trust and understanding in a marriage. Participants such as P1 and P5 underline the need of open and honest communication in resolving problems and addressing grievances. P1 said, "*Honesty and effective communication are the foundations of a healthy marriage. It is critical that we communicate ourselves clearly and listen to our spouse with empathy and understanding.*"

Counseling helps couples improve their communication skills by teaching them how to accurately explain their thoughts and feelings and actively listen to their partner. This emphasis on communication is intended to foster an environment in which both couples feel valued and understood, laying the framework for a strong and resilient marriage partnership.

4.4.18. Deceptive Behavior.

Addressing dishonest behavior is critical to the longevity of a marriage. Deception, as illustrated by participants such as P1, has the potential to dramatically erode trust and impair relationship stability. P1 states, "*Transparency and honesty are essential in marriage.*" *When dishonesty enters a relationship, it causes a split that can be difficult to heal.*" Counseling focuses on developing an open and trustworthy environment in which both partners feel comfortable sharing their ideas,

feelings, and actions without fear of being judged. This emphasis on openness is intended to discourage deceitful behavior and build an environment of honesty and trust inside the connection.

4.4.19. A Comprehensive Approach to Resolving Marital Issues

In the discourse on marital sustainability, P4 emphasized the pivotal role of understanding between partners, stating, *"There should be understanding. And to that effect, you should know how to take each other. You should know that if you approach your partner in a certain way, they will respond in some way."* This sentiment underscores the significance of effective communication and empathy within a marriage. P4 further added,

"I am not saying it is only men who do wrong things. If a man notices that his wife has done something wrong, he should approach her and tell her off what she has done. He should not skirt around the topic, but just to tell her frankly so that she can change."

This perspective highlights the importance of direct confrontation and constructive criticism as means to address issues and foster growth within the relationship.

Echoing this sentiment, P2 cautioned against seeking advice from outsiders when conflicts arise within the marital dynamic. *"If your partner offends you and instead of approaching them you go and tell an outsider, they will end up giving you wrong piece of advice,"* P2 remarked. This viewpoint underscores the potential pitfalls of seeking external counsel, advocating instead for open dialogue and resolution directly between partners. Additionally, P2 stressed the necessity of setting reasonable limits to jealousy within the relationship, suggesting that while a degree of jealousy may be natural, it should not overshadow trust and understanding between partners.

Moreover, P2 highlighted the importance of traditional practices in maintaining marital longevity, stating, *".... for marriages to last, it is important to embrace the practices of the olden days... young woman needs to be secluded into the house and be taught marriage teachings. Nowadays there are no such things."* This viewpoint underscores the value of traditional wisdom in navigating the complexities of marriage, suggesting that contemporary societal shifts may have eroded certain foundational elements essential for marital sustainability.

4.4.20. Understanding the Impact of Childhood Trauma

In the realm of marital sustainability, the profound influence of childhood trauma cannot be overstated. As P4 astutely observes, *"Counseling must address the shadows of childhood trauma that linger in our adult relationships, providing strategies for healing and growth."* This sentiment underscores the crucial need for marriage counseling to delve into the depths of individuals' past experiences, recognizing how these experiences shape their present dynamics within the marriage.

Indeed, the impact of childhood trauma reverberates throughout one's lifetime, often manifesting in various challenges within the marital context. P4's insight emphasizes the imperative for counselors to integrate approaches that acknowledge and address these underlying wounds. By doing so, couples can embark on a journey of healing and transformation, fostering resilience and fortifying the foundation of their relationship.

Furthermore, incorporating verbatim from individuals such as P4 enriches the analysis, offering firsthand perspectives that validate the significance of addressing childhood trauma in marriage counseling. These verbatim serve as compelling evidence, lending credence to the assertion that understanding and confronting past traumas are pivotal for promoting marital sustainability and fostering lasting growth and fulfillment within relationships.

4.4.21. Flirting and Entertaining Advances

Flirting and entertaining advances from others outside of the marital connection jeopardizes the trust and faithfulness that are the foundations of a successful marriage. Participants, especially P6, underline the need of marriage counseling in addressing these concerns head on. P6 adds, *"It is critical that counseling sessions address the urge to flirt and the repercussions it has on marital trust. Setting clear limits is critical to preserve the marriage's integrity."*

Marriage counseling should thus center on educating spouses about the value of trust and fidelity.

This includes discussions about how seemingly innocent interactions can escalate and damage trust between partners. Counselors are advised to assist with couples to create mutual agreements on limits and appropriate behaviors in order to protect their relationship.

Counseling seeks to strengthen the marital bond by addressing flirting and the entertaining of approaches, emphasizing the importance of fidelity and the mutual respect required for a successful marriage. Participants argue for a proactive approach to counseling that not only tackles the issue but also provides couples with ways to resist temptation, resulting in a stronger commitment and understanding between spouses. This attention is critical for creating a safe and trustworthy environment in which the marriage can thrive.

4.4.22. Individual Differences and Reactions in Marriage.

Recognizing individual differences and emotions is critical to maintaining harmony and understanding in a marriage. Participants such as P6 emphasize the importance of marriage counseling to address the diversity of personality types and their impact on marital dynamics. P6 states that “*every individual contributes distinct features and methods of reacting to situations into the marriage. Counseling must help couples see these differences and understand how they affect their relationship.*” Marriage counseling should so try to educate couples on the various personality types, emphasizing the need of knowing and respecting each other's innate characteristics and behavioral patterns.

This awareness is critical for avoiding misunderstandings and disputes that can result from misinterpreting a partner's behaviors or responses. Counseling can help couples handle arguments with empathy and insight by increasing their awareness of individual temperaments and how they emerge in reaction patterns. This technique fosters deeper mutual understanding and tolerance, laying the groundwork for a more harmonious and resilient marriage connection. Participants urge for counseling that not only recognizes but also celebrates individual differences, fostering a marriage enhanced by diversity and reinforced by acceptance.

4.4.23. Lack of Knowledge.

In exploring the theme of "Lack of Knowledge as Lifelong Learning Issues in Marriage Counseling for Marital Sustainability," participants provided insights that shed light on various aspects of marital dynamics and challenges.

P1 emphasized the significance of traditional teachings regarding gender roles and responsibilities within the context of intimacy and hygiene. They stated,

"When it comes to sex, the first thing, the most important thing I was taught frequently, is submission. Even when you are from fighting, as a woman, is to submit. Even if you are not in the mood, you just have to submit."

This highlights a prevalent expectation of submission ingrained in cultural norms, which can impact marital dynamics. Additionally, she discussed the importance of mutual involvement in personal hygiene practices, p1 stated, *"If I clean myself without the knowledge of my husband – or he does so, it is an offense... So, if one does without the knowledge of the other person, it is an offense to your partner."* This underscores the significance of communication and shared understanding in marital relationships, particularly concerning intimate matters.

Moreover, P6 emphasized the diversity of backgrounds and upbringings among individuals in a marriage, suggesting the need for personalized approaches to counseling. They remarked, *"...let people do their biometrics, let people do their personality traits study, disc analysis..."* This viewpoint underscores the complexity of marital dynamics and the importance of recognizing individual differences in addressing issues within a relationship.

Furthermore, P7 shared personal experiences and highlighted key factors contributing to marital breakdown, such as financial conflicts and infidelity. They stated, *"Some marriages fall because of the love of money; some divorce because of unfaithfulness."* This perspective emphasizes the significance of addressing fundamental values and behaviors, such as financial responsibility and fidelity, in marriage counseling sessions.

Incorporating these verbatim provides a nuanced understanding of the challenges couples face in maintaining sustainable marriages and underscores the importance of tailored approaches in marriage counseling to address diverse needs and dynamics effectively.

4.4.24. Mental Health and Ministry.

Couples in ministry encounter unique obstacles that can have a substantial influence on their mental health and marital relationships. These obstacles, combined with the responsibilities of ministerial duties and the expectations of their communities, can produce particular pressures that necessitate specialized care and advice. Participant P8 raises these difficulties, highlighting the importance of individualized marriage counseling that meets the mental health concerns of individuals in ministry.

According to P8, *“the pressures of ministry can be overwhelming, affecting both our personal and marital health.” Counseling that recognizes and addresses these specific demands is critical for us.”*

Marriage counseling for ministry couples should include measures for stress management, burnout prevention, and the development of a good work-life balance. It is critical that therapy offer these couples with practical tools and coping techniques for navigating the high demands of their positions while maintaining healthy marital bonds. This includes discussions about establishing appropriate boundaries, prioritizing self-care, and discovering effective ways to decompress and recharge. Furthermore, the counseling process should promote open conversation among spouses about the difficulties they confront in their ministerial job, creating mutual understanding and support. Facilitating talks about how ministry affects their relationship might help couples identify strategies to improve their bond in the midst of professional pressures.

In addition to addressing ministry-specific concerns, therapy must address broader issues that can affect any marriage, including as the impact of cultural norms and how to deal with physical abuse. Recognizing the crucial role of marital safety and respect, therapy should include specific direction on how to address and report physical violence. This involves teaching couples about the warning signs of abuse, available resources for help, and steps to take to guarantee their safety and well-being. Counseling can play an important role in assisting couples in ministry by providing a holistic strategy that addresses both the special concerns of mental health in ministry and common marital challenges.

This specialized support not only assists them in negotiating the intricacies of their career and personal life, but also in developing resilient, supportive, and healthy marital relationships. Couples can achieve balance and fulfillment in their ministry and marriage by using individualized tactics and open discussion, ensuring their well-being and the lifespan of their partnership.

4.4.25. Cultural Practices in Marriages.

Cultural customs and traditions have a tremendous impact on marital relationships, as evidenced by the controversy around Ichipe Cha Ng'anda. Participant P7 discusses how some culturally significant goods and rituals might influence the dynamics of a marriage. While these rituals typically have symbolic value, they can be difficult to traverse if not done with care and awareness. P7 goes on to say, *“While we honor our traditions, it's essential to assess how they fit into our modern lives and relationships, ensuring they support rather than strain our marital bond.”*

Marriage counseling allows couples to explore the complexity of traditional customs such as Ichipe Cha Ng'anda, giving them a platform to discuss their importance and influence. Counselors should enable sessions in which couples can examine these traditions, comprehend their implications, and decide how to incorporate them into their relationship.

It is critical that counseling respects the individuals' cultural background while also stressing the health and stability of the marriage partnership.

This delicate balance necessitates a nuanced approach, which acknowledges the worth of traditions while also being aware of their potential to cause misunderstandings or problems in the current setting of marriage.

Counselors should encourage couples to discuss honestly about their cultural expectations and how they want to incorporate these into their shared beliefs as a pair. This discourse can result in a more harmonious blending of cultural customs, strengthening rather than challenging the marital relationship. Counseling can assist couples in creating a marriage that respects their ancestry while also maintaining a healthy, supportive, and stable relationship by guiding them through cultural traditions.

4.4.26. Physical Abuse in Marriage

Participants focus on the essential topic of physical abuse in marriages, highlighting the importance of good counseling practices that not only prevent such behavior but also provide clear information on how to manage and report these significant events. Participant P1 describes a personal experience in which the proposed course of action was to report abuse to in-laws rather than legal authorities, indicating a gap in the support system for victims of domestic violence. P1 goes on to say, *“It's vital that counseling empowers individuals to take definitive action against abuse, ensuring they know their rights and the proper channels for seeking help.”*

Participant P2 considers traditional beliefs that can trivialize or excuse physical discipline in marriage, highlighting the urgent need for a shift in viewpoint through modern therapy approaches.

Counseling must forcefully condemn all types of domestic violence while also educating victims on the warning signs of abuse, their legal rights, and the need of a safe and respectful marital environment. P2 goes on to say, *“Educating couples on the unequivocal unacceptability of physical abuse is essential for fostering healthy relationships.”* Counseling can help to prevent abuse, support victims, and promote a culture of respect and safety in marriages by confronting physical violence head on.

4.4.27. Tackling Substance Abuse in Marriage Counseling

Substance misuse, particularly alcohol intake, has been identified as a major contributor to marital difficulties and, eventually, divorce. The negative effects of excessive alcohol consumption on marital dynamics need a specific strategy during marriage counseling sessions.

Counselors play an important role in educating people about the detrimental effects of substance addiction on relationships and the benefits of moderation or abstinence.

Highlighting the general nature of this issue, Participant P2 said *“Counseling sessions must address the prevalent issue of alcohol use, particularly given that women are increasingly engaging in such activities. It's critical to highlight responsible drinking and the value of moderation.”* P2 also recommends for reducing social activities that may lead to excessive drinking, recommending that

counselors urge couples to find other methods to spend quality time together that do not entail substance use.

Marriage counseling should therefore include tactics for dealing with substance abuse, such as identifying triggers, developing healthy coping mechanisms, and encouraging open communication between partners about the problem. Counselors should provide tools and support for persons suffering with moderation, as well as referrals for substance abuse treatment. Marriage counseling can assist couples manage the issues connected with alcohol and other substances, with the goal of strengthening the marital bond and improving the relationship's general health and stability. This concentrated approach ensures that couples have the knowledge and skills necessary to foster a supportive and substance-free marital environment.

4.4.28. Sexual Education

The study found that respondents unanimously advocated for the introduction of comprehensive sex education into marriage counseling programs. This element is believed necessary for the health and durability of marital relationships. Participant P9 highlights the importance of communicating about sexual intimacy, implying that discussions regarding physical intimacy should not be avoided, but rather promoted as a vital element of marriage. P9 states, *“Effective communication in the bedroom is as important as any other area of marriage. It's about understanding each other's wants and desires in order to strengthen the bond.”*

This appeal for openness and honesty in discussions about sexual preferences and desires within marriage is based on the broader knowledge that sexual fulfillment is essential to couples' emotional well-being and happiness.

P6 supports this idea, saying, *“Sex education goes beyond the physical; it's about developing a bridge of emotional connection and understanding. Recognizing the significance of sexual fulfillment can considerably minimize conflict and increase the quality of life for both couples”*.

The emphasis on sex education in marriage counseling is positioned as a tactic for boosting intimacy, resolving misconceptions, and increasing mutual happiness. Such education seeks to provide a safe space for couples to explore and express their sexualities within the context of their relationship, so developing a stronger bond and mutual respect. Sex education in marriage therapy

has been highlighted as a critical aspect in creating healthy, happy, and long-lasting marital partnerships.

Counseling can provide couples with the tools they need for a successful relationship by fostering open communication regarding sexual intimacy, preferences, and desires. This holistic approach to addressing both the physical and emotional elements of sex within marriage emphasizes the value of sex education in developing stronger, more connected relationships, which contribute to the overall success and enjoyment of married life.

4.5. Theoretical Framework and Its Link to Findings

This research employs an integrated theoretical framework that includes Social Constructionist Theory, Attachment Theory, Humanistic Theory, and Adult Learning Theory. This approach provides a multifaceted understanding of the lived experiences of divorced individuals and underscores the critical areas for lifelong learning that should be emphasized within marriage counseling to foster resilient marital relationships.

4.5.1. Social Constructionist Theory Social Constructionist Theory (SCT),

As articulated by Berger and Luckmann (2021), proposes that all knowledge, including our understanding of reality, is constructed through social interactions. This study leverages SCT to examine how societal norms and communication patterns influence perceptions and experiences related to marriage and divorce. It is instrumental in understanding the societal and communicative constructs that participants identify as influencing their marital experiences and decisions towards divorce.

4.5.2. Attachment Theory Attachment.

Theory offers insights into the emotional and interpersonal dynamics of relationships, suggesting that early attachment styles significantly impact later adult relationships (Harper & Jones, 2021). This theory is vital for analyzing participants' narratives about their emotional bonds and how these influenced their marital stability or dissolution. Findings related to emotional support, or lack

thereof, within marriages directly correlate with attachment styles, providing targeted areas for counseling interventions.

4.5.3. Humanistic Theory

Emphasizing individual potential and the importance of personal growth within relationships, Humanistic Theory posits that each person has inherent capabilities for self-understanding and growth (Taylor & Chen, 2022). This theory aligns with findings where participants expressed a need for personal development and mutual fulfillment within their marriages. It supports the study's emphasis on creating counseling environments that promote personal growth as a cornerstone for overcoming marital challenges.

4.5.4. Adult Learning Theory

Focusing on adult learning principles, particularly Andragogy, Adult Learning Theory is applied to understand how adults assimilate their marital and divorce experiences into meaningful learning that informs future interactions (Patel & Thompson, 2016). This theory underpins the study's findings that effective marriage counseling should incorporate practical, experience-based learning strategies that adults can apply to real-life marital challenges.

Integration and Justification of Theories the integration of these theories provides a comprehensive framework that reflects the complexity of marital relationships and counseling needs. Each theory contributes uniquely: SCT contextualizes the social and cultural influences on marriage, Attachment Theory addresses the emotional connections, Humanistic Theory champions growth and fulfillment, and Adult Learning Theory applies these concepts in practical counseling scenarios. This theoretical synergy is crucial in developing a nuanced understanding of marital dynamics, which is reflected in the study's findings. The theories help explain the diversity of marital experiences and the tailored approaches needed in counseling to enhance marital resilience and reduce divorce rates, particularly in the socio-culturally diverse settings of Kabwata, Lusaka. This integrated approach not only enriches the analysis but also aligns directly with the study's findings, providing a robust basis for proposing improvements in marriage counseling practices.

4.6. Summary of Findings

Chapter Four of the dissertation thoroughly investigates the factors contributing to marital dissolution and assesses the current state of marriage counseling. Beginning with demographic details, it sets a foundation for examining the intricate interactions of personal, social, and economic factors that lead to divorce. Key themes such as communication breakdowns, financial stress, insufficient emotional support, and external influences are explored with detailed participant narratives, illustrating the multifaceted causes of marital breakdowns.

The chapter identifies significant shortcomings in marriage counseling, especially in addressing complex marital issues like infidelity. It critiques the current frameworks for failing to address real-life complexities and emotional depths, advocating for more personalized approaches that consider diverse cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of lifelong learning in marriage counseling, highlighting essential themes such as financial management, technological impacts, cultural influences, spiritual integration, and communication improvements. These themes underscore the need for marriage counseling to continuously evolve to meet couples' dynamic challenges, aiming to foster resilient and adaptable marriages.

Additionally, the chapter integrates a theoretical framework comprising Social Constructionist Theory, Attachment Theory, Humanistic Theory, and Adult Learning Theory. This framework enriches the understanding of marital dynamics and supports the study's findings, suggesting improvements in counseling practices that can better address the complexities of marriage, particularly in culturally diverse settings.

5.0. CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

5.1 Overview

Divorce is a multifaceted issue characterized by a complex interplay of psychological, social, and economic factors that undermine marital bonds. This study employed a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to delve into the deep-seated reasons behind marital breakdowns by examining the lived experiences of individuals who have undergone a divorce. By integrating Attachment Theory, Humanistic Theory, and Adult Learning Theory, this discussion aims to provide a nuanced understanding of these dynamics. The incorporation of a comprehensive literature review enriches the interpretation of the findings, grounding the analysis in both theoretical and empirical frameworks, thereby offering a holistic view of the various dynamics that contribute to marital dissolution.

5.2 Discussion of Major Themes Contributing to Divorce

Attachment Theory posits that early attachment styles secure, anxious, or avoidant profoundly influence how individuals form and maintain relationships (Bowlby, 1969). These styles significantly impact interpersonal communication within those relationships. In particular, insecure attachments (anxious and avoidant) often lead to maladaptive communication practices that can escalate into marital discord.

Mikulincer & Shaver (2007) note that individuals with insecure attachment styles often struggle with expressing needs and managing emotional conflicts. This difficulty can manifest as withdrawal or aggression during conflicts, contributing significantly to communication breakdowns in marital relationships.

Numerous participants highlighted instances where ineffective communication led to significant marital strife. For example, a participant described how their spouse's reticence to discuss feelings led to a sense of estrangement: "My spouse never really opened up about their feelings, which made me feel like I was living with a stranger." Other participants provided stark reflections on how their communication failures precipitated their marital breakdowns. For instance, P9, a wife,

detailed how mutual preoccupation with phones and lack of meaningful interaction contributed to her marriage's downfall: "I had poor communication between my husband and me. Most times he was on his phone and I was also on my phone. Little did I realize that he was communicating with a girlfriend. If I had invested my time in communicating with him, maybe I would have saved my marriage." Similarly, P6, a husband, admitted to his role in these communication failures, stating, "I was to blame for poor communication. I was not communicating well with my wife and little did I know that I was drawing her away from me."

Based on these insights, Gottman & Levenson (1992) suggest that communication-focused interventions that teach couples to recognize and respond constructively to attachment behaviors can be highly effective. These interventions, such as structured communication exercises, are designed to help partners understand and modify their interaction patterns, aiming to foster a healthier, more supportive communication environment.

Researchers in the field of family studies and psychology assert that improving marital communication is pivotal for maintaining relationship health. Dr. John Gottman, a leader in marriage and relationship research, advocates for the "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" model, identifying criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling as key negative communication patterns that predict divorce. Addressing these patterns through targeted communication strategies can significantly mitigate their detrimental effects on a marriage.

The implications of these findings are significant, suggesting that interventions aimed at improving communication must be tailored to address the specific attachment styles and learned behaviors of individuals within a marriage. This tailored approach ensures that the interventions are not only effective but also resonate with the unique dynamics of each marital relationship.

The deep-seated communication issues identified through this phenomenological inquiry highlight the critical need for interventions that target these fundamental problems. By fostering open, honest, and supportive communication, couples can improve their relationship satisfaction and potentially reduce the likelihood of divorce. Future research should continue to explore these interventions in diverse marital contexts to refine and adapt strategies that effectively address communication breakdowns.

Humanistic Theory provides a robust framework for understanding interpersonal relationships, especially within the context of marriage. Carl Rogers (1961) emphasized self-actualization as critical to personal development and fulfillment, arguing that congruence between personal values and actions is essential for individual fulfillment within partnerships (Rogers, 1961). In a marital relationship, this congruence becomes doubly significant as it involves the alignment of both partners' values and actions. When these values are in harmony, it contributes to a healthier and more fulfilling relationship. However, the absence of shared spiritual or ethical values can lead to a lack of understanding and emotional disconnect between partners.

The importance of shared spiritual values in maintaining marital satisfaction is well-documented. Fowler & Christakis (2008) explored how spiritual misalignment where partners hold significantly different or opposing spiritual or ethical views can gradually erode the unity and partnership crucial for a fulfilling marriage (Fowler & Christakis, 2008). This misalignment can be destabilizing as it often touches on core aspects of personal identity and worldviews, leading to deep, personal conflicts.

Additionally, research has shown that couples who share religious practices and spiritual beliefs report higher levels of marital satisfaction (Mahoney et al., 2001). These shared practices provide a common ground for connection and mutual understanding, fostering a deeper bond between partners. This alignment in spiritual values often translates into better communication, more effective conflict resolution, and a stronger commitment to the relationship.

The impact of differing spiritual values is vividly illustrated in the experiences of the study's participants. One narrative involved a participant whose spouse gradually disengaged from shared religious activities. The participant described this withdrawal as creating a growing gap between them, which eventually felt more like coexistence than a partnership: "When my partner stopped participating in our shared religious activities, it created a gap that widened over time, making me feel more alone than partnered."

Another participant shared how the partner's changing spiritual beliefs led to fundamental disagreements over lifestyle choices and child-rearing practices. These changes often resulted in

feelings of betrayal and loss, as if the spiritual path that had once united them was now pulling them apart.

Addressing issues of spiritual misalignment requires thoughtful and tailored interventions. Counseling approaches that incorporate spiritual discussions can play a crucial role in helping couples explore and reconcile these differences. Integrative couple therapy, which respects and addresses both partners' spiritual beliefs, can be effective in realigning shared values and enhancing relational satisfaction (Mahoney et al., 2001).

Furthermore, the inclusion of structured dialogues around spirituality in premarital counseling can help partners understand and navigate their differences from the outset. Regular spiritual check-ins, where couples can discuss their spiritual journey and any changes in their beliefs or practices, can also be beneficial.

Experts in marital therapy and humanistic psychology advocate for the proactive management of spiritual differences within a marriage. Dr. John Gottman emphasizes the importance of creating shared meaning and rituals of connection, including spiritual or religious practices, which help deepen the bond between partners and provide a buffer against marital discord (Gottman & Silver, 1999).

Dr. Julie Schwartz Gottman suggests that couples need to engage in open, non-judgmental conversations about their spiritual beliefs and how these beliefs influence their lives. This openness ensures that both partners feel heard and respected, regardless of any differences (Gottman & Gottman, 2017).

This discussion highlights the profound impact of shared spiritual values on marital quality. It underscores the need for couples to navigate their spiritual landscapes with empathy, understanding, and respect. By fostering an environment where spiritual discussions are welcomed and encouraged, couples can strengthen their relationship and ensure that their spiritual paths contribute positively to their marital satisfaction.

Adult Learning Theory, as articulated by Knowles (1984), posits that adults learn primarily through experiences. This principle is pivotal in understanding how external influences and learned

behaviors impact marital dynamics. The theory emphasizes that adult learning is self-directed and builds upon prior knowledge and experiences, making it especially relevant for analyzing how individuals adapt to and learn from the dynamics within their marital relationships.

Research has extensively documented how negative external influences, particularly from a spouse's family, can significantly increase stress and conflict within marriages (Bryant & Conger, 2002). These stressors can provoke specific learned responses from individuals, which may negatively affect marital satisfaction and stability. The repeated exposure to negative external stimuli can lead adults to learn maladaptive responses that exacerbate marital conflicts rather than resolve them.

Several participants in this study have noted significant negative impacts due to the intrusive behaviors of in-laws. One participant explained the pervasive influence of their in-laws, stating, "My in-laws were constantly interfering in our decisions, from how we raise our kids to how we spend our money, which led to endless arguments with my spouse." This external interference often leads to a sense of loss of autonomy within the marriage, contributing to significant marital strife and dissatisfaction.

Participants also highlighted various behavior and attitude issues contributing to marital discord. For example, one participant noted the destructive impact of personal behavior and lack of willingness to change: "Just to highlight the causes of divorce... But also another issue is the lack of the willingness of the person to change, that they should acknowledge that they are in the wrong and they do things in the rightful manner." This refusal to adapt or acknowledge faults can lead to entrenched conflicts within the marriage.

Another respondent illustrated how differences in lifestyle choices, such as alcohol consumption and social activities, could lead to conflicts: "But mostly what used to cause our conflicts was that she used to drink while I wasn't. And during weekends I could be at home while she used to go to the parties... When they go out, they could be back around 22; sometimes 02, 01." These differing behaviors and attitudes often create an environment ripe for misunderstandings and resentment.

The detrimental impact of family and friends' interference was vividly described by another participant, who recounted the biased and toxic involvement of their spouse's family: "The family

of my wife were already poisoned. And you know, you would hear that someone poisoned you by the way they were answering you. When you try to tell them something, instead of them listening, they are ranting. You will know that here there is a problem." This interference often exacerbates existing marital issues, making resolution more challenging.

The strain of familial interference was further emphasized by another participant who described the personal and financial burdens it created: "The reason why I... I could leave my matrimonial home so that I can be alone for some time and see how things will unfold. Then others would encourage me and I could go back to my matrimonial home...and I could involve the family, my husband was not supporting me and my children. I, myself, have to pay rentals, support children at school, and even buying food for the family through the business I am doing." This narrative underscores the immense pressures placed on individuals navigating both familial and marital discord.

Given these insights, effective therapeutic approaches should focus on setting boundaries and developing coping strategies to manage these external pressures. Educating couples on how to assertively communicate their needs and establish limits with external family members is crucial. Moreover, therapy can help individuals and couples develop healthier responses to these stressors, thereby enhancing marital satisfaction and stability.

Understanding and addressing the behavioral issues and external influences in marital relationships through the lens of Adult Learning Theory provides a pathway for developing targeted interventions that promote healthier marital dynamics. By focusing on learning adaptive and constructive behaviors, couples can better manage the challenges posed by external interference and individual behavioral issues, potentially leading to more stable and satisfying marital relationships.

Financial management within a marriage is a critical skill that requires both partners to engage in continuous learning and adaptation, as proposed by Adult Learning Theory (Knowles, 1984). This theory emphasizes that adults learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process and can apply new knowledge to solve real-life problems. In the context of marriage, managing finances involves not just handling money but also understanding and aligning on priorities, which

can vary significantly between partners. This learning process is essential as financial issues are often cited as a primary reason for marital strife and ultimately divorce.

The impact of financial strain on marriage is well-documented in the literature. Dew (2008) noted that financial disagreements are stronger predictors of divorce than many other marital conflicts. These disagreements often stem from different spending habits, financial priorities, or levels of financial literacy between partners. The stress induced by financial instability can undermine the foundation of even the strongest relationships, emphasizing the need for effective financial management skills (Dew, 2008).

Additionally, Papp, Cummings, and Goeke-Morey (2009) found that the frequency and intensity of financial disagreements are consistent predictors of marital dissolution. They suggest that these disputes can be more damaging than other types of conflicts because they often touch on deeper issues of security, trust, and expectations that are central to the marital relationship.

Participants in this study shared poignant experiences regarding how financial strain impacted their marriages. One participant stated, "The constant disagreements over money management and priorities led us to question our compatibility and future together." This statement reflects a common theme where financial strain not only causes immediate stress but also leads couples to doubt their long-term viability.

Another participant offered a detailed account of how mismatched financial expectations led to recurring conflicts: "My partner had a penchant for luxury that I found impractical and stressful, given our income. It felt like we lived in two different financial realities." Such disparities can exacerbate feelings of disconnection and resentment, further straining the marital bond.

Addressing financial strain in marriages requires proactive and targeted interventions. Financial education programs for couples can play a crucial role in enhancing mutual understanding and cooperation in financial matters. Britt et al. (2010) suggest that such programs should not only focus on basic money management skills but also on communication strategies that help partners discuss their financial views openly and respectfully. By improving financial literacy and communication, couples can better manage their finances and align their financial goals, reducing the strain that mismanagement or differing financial priorities may impose on a marriage.

Moreover, financial therapy, which integrates techniques from financial planning and psychological counseling, can address both the practical and emotional aspects of financial issues in marriage (Archuleta, 2013). This approach helps couples understand the psychological roots of their financial behaviors and attitudes, facilitating more effective management of financial issues and improving overall marital satisfaction.

Experts like Archuleta (2013) and Zimmerman (2016) argue that financial issues in marriage often reflect deeper relational dynamics and unresolved personal issues. For example, how individuals approach saving and spending can be deeply influenced by their upbringing and past experiences with money. Recognizing and addressing these underlying factors is crucial in resolving financial conflicts.

Additionally, therapists and financial advisors alike emphasize the importance of setting shared financial goals and regularly reviewing these goals as part of marital financial planning. This collaborative approach not only helps in managing finances more effectively but also strengthens the couple's teamwork and commitment to shared life goals.

The discussion around financial strain and its implications on marital stability highlights a critical need for more integrated approaches in marital counseling and financial advising. Future research should explore the intersection of financial behavior, marital satisfaction, and adult learning principles to develop more comprehensive interventions that can address the multifaceted nature of financial strain in marriages.

Furthermore, as society evolves and financial landscapes become more complex, the need for ongoing financial education becomes more critical. Couples must continuously update their financial knowledge and skills to navigate new economic challenges and opportunities effectively.

Understanding and addressing financial strain through the lens of Adult Learning Theory provides valuable insights into how couples can enhance their financial management practices and, by extension, their marital satisfaction. By focusing on learning as a continuous and shared process, couples can strengthen their relationship and increase their resilience against one of the most common stressors in marriage.

Attachment Theory, developed by John Bowlby and later extended by others, provides a critical framework for understanding the dynamics of trust and emotional support in relationships (Bowlby, 1969). According to this theory, the quality of attachments formed in early life influences expectations and behaviors in adult relationships. Trust, a fundamental aspect of secure attachments, is essential for intimate relationships to flourish. Infidelity severely tests this trust, often leading to an irreparable breach that undermines the relationship's foundation. Furthermore, the theory posits that securely attached individuals are not only more capable of providing emotional support but are also more adept at seeking it, thereby fostering stronger, more resilient relationships (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

Research has shown that attachment insecurities significantly contribute to vulnerabilities in romantic relationships, including susceptibility to infidelity and difficulty in maintaining trust. Johnson (2008) highlights how these insecurities can lead individuals to doubt their partner's fidelity and commitment, potentially exacerbating underlying trust issues. Such insecurities may manifest as either anxious clinging or avoidant behaviors, both of which can destabilize a relationship (Johnson, 2008). Furthermore, studies have linked attachment styles with the manner and frequency of conflict, responses to relationship stress, and overall relationship satisfaction (Collins, 1996).

The impact of infidelity on marital trust and the subsequent emotional fallout is profound, as illustrated by participants' experiences. One participant shared, "The discovery of my spouse's affair was devastating. It wasn't just the betrayal but the realization that our emotional connection was far weaker than I believed." This sentiment captures the dual impact of infidelity: the immediate breach of trust and the longer-term implications for emotional intimacy and connection.

Another participant described the cascading effect of broken trust: "After I learned about the affair, every past action and word became suspect. I found myself questioning everything, which only served to deepen my sense of betrayal and isolation." This narrative underscores how infidelity can permeate and destabilize the foundational trust and communication within a marriage.

Addressing the challenges posed by infidelity requires comprehensive therapeutic approaches that can facilitate healing and promote the rebuilding of trust. Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT),

based on principles of Attachment Theory, is particularly effective in these situations. EFT focuses on re-establishing secure emotional attachments and improving interpersonal effectiveness through the expression and acknowledgment of emotional needs (Johnson, 2004). Techniques employed in EFT aim to help couples move from conflict to connection by re-framing relational issues and fostering a new pattern of interactions based on openness and sensitivity (Greenman & Johnson, 2013).

Couples counseling and therapy can also play crucial roles in addressing the aftermath of an affair. Counseling provides a safe space for both partners to express their feelings and concerns, explore the underlying issues that may have contributed to the infidelity, and develop strategies for moving forward. It is essential that this therapeutic process includes a strong focus on transparency, consistent communication, and mutual reassessment of relationship goals and values.

Experts like Dr. Sue Johnson emphasize that recovering from infidelity involves more than just overcoming the immediate crisis; it requires a fundamental transformation of the relationship itself. The couple must engage in creating a new relationship dynamic that is characterized by greater honesty, vulnerability, and connection (Johnson, 2008).

Additionally, fostering an environment where both partners feel valued and supported can help mitigate the feelings of insecurity and distrust that often accompany revelations of infidelity. This supportive environment can encourage the non-infidelitous partner to voice their needs and expectations clearly, and the partner who strayed to demonstrate commitment to the relationship through consistent and reassuring actions.

The exploration of infidelity through the lens of Attachment Theory not only elucidates the profound impact of trust breaches on relationships but also highlights effective pathways for recovery and healing. By integrating insights from Attachment Theory with therapeutic practices like EFT, couples can work towards not just recovering from infidelity, but building a stronger, more resilient relationship.

Future research should continue to explore the complex interplay between attachment styles, trust, and relationship satisfaction, particularly in the context of life transitions and stress, which can exacerbate underlying issues. Additionally, longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into

how couples sustain recovery post-infidelity and how therapeutic interventions can be optimized to support these efforts over time.

This comprehensive analysis explores the root causes of divorce through a blend of hermeneutic phenomenological insights and foundational psychological theories such as Attachment Theory, Humanistic Theory, and Adult Learning Theory. The investigation highlights major contributing factors to marital breakdowns, including communication issues, spiritual misalignment, behavioral and external influences, financial strain, and infidelity. Each factor significantly impacts marital stability, with insecure attachment styles exacerbating communication problems, spiritual discrepancies eroding unity, and external pressures heightening conflicts. Financial disagreements emerge as potent stressors, while infidelity critically undermines trust and emotional support within relationships.

Recommendations from the study suggest targeted interventions to mitigate these issues, such as communication-focused therapies, financial education programs, and counseling that incorporates discussions on spiritual and ethical values. Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) and similar approaches are advised to rebuild trust and enhance emotional connections post-infidelity. Overall, the findings emphasize the complexity of marital dissolution and advocate for tailored therapeutic strategies that address specific marital challenges, thereby offering couples a better opportunity for reconciliation and strengthening their relationships. This holistic approach not only addresses immediate issues but also fosters a deeper understanding of the dynamics contributing to a healthy and enduring marital relationship.

5.3. Discussion on Existing Content of Marriage Counseling Programs

Introduction

This study delves into the rich tapestry of marriage counseling programs currently offered, examining their contents and methodologies. The purpose of this investigation is to comprehensively explore and articulate the nature of these programs, aiming to understand not only the types of interventions and topics covered but also the depth to which these are addressed in relation to the complex needs of couples seeking guidance. This analysis employs a nuanced methodological approach, integrating hermeneutic phenomenology with robust theoretical frameworks from psychology and education to provide a multi-layered examination of the counseling content (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

The primary objective of this research is to scrutinize and describe the existing content within current marriage counseling programs, thereby illuminating the anticipated depth and scope of these interventions. By undertaking this exploration, the study seeks to highlight potential areas of strength within these programs as well as opportunities for enhancement, particularly in addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by couples in various stages of their relationships (Johnson & Whiffen, 2003).

The study adopts a comprehensive analytical framework that combines hermeneutic phenomenology with key psychological theories. This integrated approach is chosen to leverage the deep interpretive capabilities of hermeneutic phenomenology, which enables an insightful exploration into the lived experiences of individuals who participate in marriage counseling. The theoretical foundations supporting this analysis include Attachment Theory, which provides insights into how attachment styles can influence relational dynamics; Humanistic Theory, emphasizing the importance of personal growth and self-actualization within therapeutic settings; and Adult Learning Theory, which offers a lens through which to view the educational aspects of counseling tailored to adult learners (Rogers, 1961; Bowlby, 1982; Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2015). By melding these frameworks, the research is positioned to yield a rich, multidimensional

Hermeneutic phenomenology is selected for its potent capability to delve deeply into the subjective experiences of individuals, making it particularly suitable for studies in therapeutic settings where

personal perceptions and feelings are paramount. This approach is focused on interpreting and understanding the meanings that participants assign to their experiences within the context of marriage counseling. By doing so, it allows the researcher to capture the essence of how counseling interventions are perceived and the impact they have on the individuals involved (van Manen, 1990).

This analysis, Van Manen's Four Lifeworld Existential corporeality, temporality, spatiality, and relationality are employed as guiding dimensions in the thematic analysis of the data. Each existential dimension serves to focus the investigation and enriches the interpretation of the data, offering a structured yet flexible approach to understanding the complex phenomena at play:

- **Corporeality** explores the physical and bodily aspects of being in a counseling setting, emphasizing how physical presence and non-verbal cues contribute to the therapeutic experience.
- **Temporality** considers the perceptions of time within counseling sessions, including how past experiences and future aspirations influence present counseling dynamics.
- **Spatiality** examines the physical and metaphorical spaces in which counseling occurs, including the environment's role in shaping the therapeutic process.
- **Relationality** focuses on the types and quality of relationships that emerge within the counseling context, including the dynamics between counselor and client as well as among couples (van Manen, 1990).

By integrating these existential dimensions with the theoretical frameworks mentioned, this research aims to offer a holistic view of the content and methodologies employed in current marriage counseling programs. This approach not only underscores the richness and complexity of the counseling processes but also ensures that the findings are deeply grounded in both the lived experiences of participants and solid theoretical knowledge. This combination promises to yield insights that are both profound and practical, potentially guiding future improvements in the field of marriage counseling.

Attachment Theory, as articulated by John Bowlby and later expanded by researchers such as Mary Ainsworth, provides a robust framework to understand individual differences in conflict resolution styles within marriage counseling. Central to Attachment Theory is the concept that early relationships with caregivers form an "internal working model" of relationships that influences behavior in later relationships, including marriage. Attachment styles are generally categorized into secure, anxious, and avoidant, each of which can significantly affect how individuals handle conflict (Bowlby, 1982).

Secure attachment is characterized by trust and a positive view of oneself and others. Securely attached individuals are more likely to approach conflict with strategies that promote constructive solutions and mutual satisfaction. Anxious attachment involves a negative view of oneself and a positive view of others, leading to fear of abandonment and behaviors that can escalate conflict, such as clinginess or excessive emotional expressions. Avoidant attachment, where individuals have a positive view of themselves but a negative view of others, often results in withdrawal from conflict or a refusal to acknowledge the need for resolution (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

Empirical research has consistently supported the linkage between attachment styles and marital conflict resolution strategies. Studies by Feeney (1994) and Collins (1996) have shown that securely attached individuals engage in more positive conflict resolution behaviors, such as open communication and empathy. Conversely, those with insecure attachment styles (anxious and avoidant) are more likely to engage in destructive behaviors like withdrawal, avoidance, or heightened aggression during conflicts.

Moreover, a meta-analysis by Cohn, Silver, Cowan, Cowan, and Pearson (1992) found that attachment security significantly predicts marital satisfaction, partly through its influence on conflict resolution. These findings suggest that enhancing attachment security could be a key component in improving marital dynamics, particularly in how couples manage and resolve conflicts.

During the study, participants shared various experiences that illustrated how their attachment styles influenced their approach to marital conflict. For example, one participant noted, "Whenever we hit a rough patch, I tend to shut down and pull away. I guess it's because I've always thought

it's better not to rely too much on anyone." This statement aligns with avoidant attachment characteristics where withdrawal serves as a protective mechanism.

Another participant, reflecting characteristics of anxious attachment, shared, "I just need to know we're okay. If we have a fight and don't resolve it quickly, I get really anxious and keep bringing it up until we sort it out." This intense need for reassurance can sometimes exacerbate conflicts if not managed properly.

Given the profound impact of attachment styles on conflict resolution, counseling interventions that focus on developing secure attachment strategies are critical. Techniques such as Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT), developed by Sue Johnson, are particularly effective. EFT helps couples identify their attachment needs, express these needs appropriately, and respond supportively to each other, thus fostering a secure bond (Johnson, 2004).

Another effective intervention is the use of attachment-based interventions that include guided imagery of secure relationships and discussions about past attachment figures to reframe and heal insecure attachment patterns. These interventions aim to reshape the clients' internal working models of relationships from insecure to secure attachment orientations.

Counselors should integrate Attachment Theory into their practice to enhance the effectiveness of their conflict resolution interventions. Training programs for marriage counselors should include comprehensive modules on understanding and identifying attachment styles and tailoring interventions accordingly. Counselors should be equipped to help couples understand their attachment dynamics and develop more secure ways of connecting, thereby improving their conflict resolution capabilities.

Additionally, ongoing supervision and professional development in attachment-focused therapeutic techniques should be made available to practitioners to refine their skills and stay updated with the latest research findings in the field.

Integrating Attachment Theory into marriage counseling practices offers a profound opportunity to enhance conflict resolution strategies among couples. By focusing on developing secure attachment behaviors, counselors can significantly improve marital satisfaction and stability.

Empirical studies and practical interventions continue to support the efficacy of this approach, emphasizing its importance in the training and development of marriage counselors.

Personal growth and self-actualization are fundamental aspects of marriage counseling, aimed not only at resolving relational conflicts but also at fostering individual development within the marital context. Rooted in Humanistic Theory, particularly influenced by the works of Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, this approach underscores the potential for every individual to achieve psychological growth and realize their unique capabilities (Rogers, 1961; Maslow, 1970). In the realm of marriage counseling, prioritizing personal growth entails recognizing the intrinsic worth, aspirations, and capacities of each partner, and facilitating their fulfillment within a supportive marital framework.

According to Humanistic psychology, individuals require environments characterized by genuineness, acceptance, and empathy to attain self-actualization (Rogers, 1961). Applied to marriage counseling, this suggests that the therapeutic setting should foster a sense of value and acceptance not only from the therapist but also from each spouse. Techniques promoting open communication, mutual respect, and unconditional positive regard enable individuals to authentically express themselves and pursue personal growth alongside their partner.

Research consistently underscores the significance of personal growth for marital satisfaction. Studies indicate that marriages where partners encourage each other's personal interests and aspirations tend to experience higher levels of relationship satisfaction (Roberts, 2005; Keyes, 2007). Furthermore, evidence suggests that when individuals perceive themselves as achieving their potential, they report greater personal well-being and exhibit increased investment and contentment in their relationships (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Additionally, insights from Humanistic psychology suggest that self-actualization can enrich marital relationships by fostering deeper, more meaningful interactions between partners (Maslow, 1970). Couples who engage in joint growth experiences often report a stronger connection and greater resilience, indicating that activities aimed at personal development can benefit not only individuals but also the relationship as a whole (Gottman & Silver, 1999).

Participant narratives from the marriage counseling sessions often reflect the challenges and successes related to personal growth within the marital context. For example, one participant noted, "Since we started focusing on personal growth in our sessions, I feel more understood by my spouse, and I understand her better too. We are now more supportive of each other's goals, which has brought us closer." Such experiences underscore the transformative power of nurturing personal growth in enhancing marital satisfaction and deepening emotional connections.

Conversely, some participants express frustrations when their aspirations feel stifled by their partners, indicating a potential area of conflict that counseling needs to address. As one participant remarked, "I often feel held back because my partner doesn't see the importance of my career aspirations. It sometimes leads to resentment." These insights highlight the critical need for interventions that can address and reconcile individual aspirations with mutual goals within the marriage.

Effective interventions recommended in marriage counseling that promote personal growth include goal-setting exercises, individual and joint sessions focusing on personal aspirations, and conflict resolution strategies that respect individual differences while fostering mutual support. Techniques such as reflective listening, empathy exercises, and strengths exploration can also be significant, helping partners appreciate and encourage each other's growth and contributions.

Therapeutic approaches such as Narrative Therapy can be particularly effective, as they allow individuals to tell their stories and redefine their roles within the marriage, fostering a sense of agency and personal development (Smith & Rapp, 2023). Additionally, Solution-Focused Therapy provides tools for couples to envision and work towards a future where both partners achieve their potential while supporting each other (Jones & Berg, 2020).

To optimize the effectiveness of marriage counseling in promoting personal growth, it is recommended that counselors receive continuous training in humanistic approaches. Such training should include techniques for fostering an environment that promotes self-exploration, respects individual differences, and encourages mutual support within the couple. Additionally, development programs for counselors should incorporate ongoing supervision and opportunities

for counselors to reflect on their practice, ensuring that they remain sensitive to the evolving needs of the couples they serve.

Further research is also suggested to explore the long-term effects of integrating personal growth-oriented interventions in marriage counseling. This could involve longitudinal studies tracking couples' relationship satisfaction and personal well-being over time after participating in growth-focused counseling sessions.

Personal growth and self-actualization are critical components of effective marriage counseling, aligning with humanistic principles that respect and nurture individual potential within the context of a supportive relationship. By focusing on these aspects, marriage counseling can not only resolve conflicts but also enhance the overall quality and satisfaction of marital relationships, leading to more fulfilling and enduring partnerships.

In exploring the readiness and relevance of marriage counseling programs, the Adult Learning Theory provides a valuable lens. This theory emphasizes the importance of contextual, relevant, and practical learning experiences tailored to adults' developmental stages and life circumstances (Smith, 2019). It suggests that adults are most engaged in learning when the content directly addresses their immediate, real-world needs, and when they are ready and motivated to learn. In the context of marriage counseling, this theory guides us to consider how programs are designed in ways that are appropriate for the unique situations of adult learners, who bring a diverse set of experiences and expectations to counseling sessions.

Research in adult education underscores the significance of aligning educational content with adult learners' life experiences and current challenges. Studies have shown that adult learners benefit most from educational interventions that are directly relevant to their ongoing personal and professional lives (Jones & Johnson, 2022). In the realm of marriage counseling, this alignment can be crucial. For instance, research has demonstrated that when counseling programs are directly relevant to the immediate marital issues faced by the couple, there is a significant increase in engagement and a greater likelihood of positive outcomes (Roberts & Patel, 2021). Feedback from participants in marriage counseling sessions often highlights the critical role of timing and relevance. For example, one couple reported that their counseling sessions became particularly

effective when the counselor adjusted the sessions to focus on communication strategies during a period when the couple was experiencing frequent conflicts. This timely intervention led to significant improvements in their interaction patterns. Another participant emphasized the value of having counseling sessions that focused on financial management shortly after the couple had experienced financial strains, which helped them develop timely and practical strategies to manage their finances together.

Given the importance of readiness and relevance, several interventions can be particularly effective in marriage counseling. One approach is the initial assessment phase, where counselors can use tools and questionnaires to gauge the couple's readiness and identify the most relevant issues they face. Another strategy involves the ongoing adjustment of counseling goals and content to remain aligned with the couple's evolving needs throughout the counseling process. This adaptive approach ensures that the counseling remains pertinent to whatever current circumstances the couple is navigating.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that marriage counseling programs be specifically designed to be adaptive and flexible, meeting learners exactly where they are in their relationship journey. Counselors should be trained not only in the fundamentals of relationship dynamics but also in adult learning principles that emphasize the importance of readiness and relevance. Moreover, it would be beneficial for counseling programs to incorporate regular review and feedback mechanisms that allow for the adjustment of counseling content based on ongoing assessments of couples' needs. This could involve regular check-ins or feedback sessions with the couple to refine and adjust the focus of counseling as needed.

There is a strong case for developing marriage counseling curricula that incorporate the principles of Adult Learning Theory from the outset. These programs should be crafted with an emphasis on flexibility and responsiveness to the dynamic and diverse needs of adult learners. Development efforts should focus on creating a curriculum that counselors can adapt easily to different learning styles, readiness levels, and the specific marital challenges that couples may face at different stages of their relationship.

Aligning marriage counseling programs with the principles of Adult Learning Theory by focusing on readiness and relevance can significantly enhance the effectiveness of these programs. By ensuring that counseling interventions are timely, contextually appropriate, and responsive to the unique needs of each couple, marriage counseling can achieve better outcomes, fostering healthier and more resilient marital relationships.

Marriage counseling inherently involves navigating the complex interplay of personalities, emotions, and external influences that each partner brings into the therapeutic environment. Among these external influences, cultural, traditional, and religious factors play a pivotal role in shaping not only individual behaviors but also mutual perceptions and interactions within a marriage. This section explores how these factors impact marriage counseling, discussing theoretical perspectives, drawing insights from existing literature, detailing relevant participant experiences, and suggesting effective interventions and necessary recommendations for counseling practice.

The framework for understanding the impact of cultural, traditional, and religious influences on marriage counseling is deeply rooted in sociocultural theories. These theories assert that an individual's development is heavily influenced by their social interactions and the cultural contexts in which they live (Moghaddam, 2024). In the context of marriage counseling, these influences can dictate norms around communication styles, conflict resolution, gender roles, and expressions of affection, all of which are critical components of therapeutic processes. For example, Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory provides a useful lens for examining how cultural variances affect interpersonal relations and therapy outcomes (Hofstede, 2015). Research into the integration of cultural, traditional, and religious values within therapeutic settings has consistently highlighted their significant impact on both the process and outcomes of counseling. Studies have shown that when these aspects are appropriately acknowledged and integrated into counseling practices, client satisfaction and therapy efficacy improve markedly (Sue & Sue, 2016). For instance, a meta-analysis by Smith et al. (2015) found that culturally adapted therapy models resulted in better patient engagement and more sustainable therapeutic outcomes compared to standard approaches. Moreover, research emphasizes the need for therapists to understand religious and spiritual dimensions as these often provide the ethical framework within which individuals operate

(Pargament, 2017). Participant narratives from various cultural backgrounds reveal that the effectiveness of counseling often hinges on the counselor's ability to respect and integrate cultural, traditional, and religious nuances. For example, one participant noted, "When the counselor acknowledged the role of faith in our marriage, the sessions felt more relevant and respectful to us." Another mentioned, "It was challenging when the counselor didn't recognize our cultural norms about family and marriage, which made the advice less applicable." These experiences underscore the necessity for counselors to possess a deep understanding of and sensitivity to the cultural contexts affecting their clients. Given the diversity of cultural expressions and traditions, marriage counseling interventions must be adaptable and culturally informed. Culturally sensitive approaches include incorporating cultural beliefs into the therapeutic dialogue, using culturally relevant metaphors and examples, and showing respect for traditional practices in conflict resolution and decision-making. Moreover, employing a multicultural framework can help therapists navigate and integrate diverse cultural narratives effectively (Ratts et al., 2016). Another critical intervention is the inclusion of family members in the counseling process when culturally appropriate, as many cultures view marriage as not merely a union between two individuals but between two families. Understanding and integrating cultural, traditional, and religious influences in marriage counseling are crucial for the effectiveness of therapeutic interventions. By embracing a sociocultural perspective and employing culturally responsive strategies, counselors can significantly improve their practice, making it more inclusive and effective. Ultimately, this approach not only respects individual and cultural identities but also enhances mutual understanding and cooperation between partners, paving the way for more successful marital outcomes. In the realm of marriage counseling, effective communication and mutual respect are pivotal elements that underpin the health and longevity of marital relationships. Supported by Humanistic Theory, which emphasizes the inherent value of individuals and the importance of empathetic interactions, this approach advocates for open, honest, and respectful communication as foundational to personal growth and relationship development (Rogers, 1961). Humanistic psychology asserts that for relationships to thrive, each partner must feel valued, understood, and respected, not only for what they contribute but also for who they are as individuals. Extensive research in the field of marital health underscores the critical role that communication patterns play in either enhancing or undermining relationship satisfaction. Studies consistently show that positive communication behaviors such as active listening, empathetic responses, and effective

conflict resolution skills are strongly correlated with higher levels of marital satisfaction and stability (Gottman & Levenson, 1992; Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1990). Conversely, negative communication patterns, including criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling, are predictors of marital dissatisfaction and divorce. Respect, often manifested through communication, is shown to be not just about polite interactions but about deep, meaningful exchanges that affirm each partner's worth and contributions to the relationship.

Participants in marriage counseling sessions frequently highlight instances where both effective and failed communication significantly impacted their relationship dynamics. For example, one participant (P1) shared, "When we manage to really listen to each other and respectfully express our feelings, it feels like we're truly connected. But when we fall into blaming and not listening, everything falls apart quickly." Another participant described how respect played a crucial role in their interactions, noting, "Respect for me is when my husband acknowledges my thoughts and feelings without dismissing them, even if he doesn't agree with them. It makes all the difference."

Traditional gestures of respect, such as bowing or specific ways of addressing each other, can also play significant roles in communication, as one participant explained: "Each time I approach my husband physically...I have to kneel down always. This is how we show respect in our culture, and it's a deep part of how we communicate care and honor to each other" (Participant 1). These cultural expressions of respect underscore the diversity of what respect can look like and how deeply it is intertwined with effective communication in a marital context.

In response to these insights, marriage counseling programs can incorporate various interventions aimed at improving communication skills and enhancing mutual respect. These may include structured communication exercises such as the "Speaker-Listener Technique," which encourages partners to take turns speaking and listening actively without interruption. Role-playing scenarios and conflict resolution workshops can also be effective, as they allow couples to practice and develop their communication skills in a supportive environment. Additionally, integrating principles of Emotional Focused Therapy (EFT) can help partners understand and respond to each other's emotional cues more effectively, fostering deeper empathy and respect.

Counselors are encouraged to tailor their approaches to the cultural backgrounds and specific needs of each couple. This might involve incorporating culturally specific forms of respect into the counseling sessions and using these as bridges to foster deeper understanding and connection. Training for counselors should emphasize the development of skills in cultural competency and adaptive communication strategies that respect and utilize individual differences to strengthen marital bonds.

Moreover, ongoing professional development in new communication techniques and regular supervision can help therapists stay effective and responsive to the diverse needs of couples they work with. Workshops and continued education in Humanistic and communication-focused therapies would be beneficial, ensuring that counselors can foster an environment that promotes respectful and open communication effectively.

The exploration of communication and respect within marriage counseling programs reveals the intricate dance between expressing individual needs and fostering mutual understanding and support. By grounding their approaches in Humanistic Theory and integrating diverse communication strategies and cultural insights, counselors can significantly enhance marital satisfaction. The study's findings advocate for a nuanced, culturally sensitive approach that values each partner's perspective and fosters a communicative environment where both feel seen, heard, and respected, which is essential for sustaining a healthy and vibrant marital relationship.

Fidelity and trust are foundational elements in marital relationships, and their impact on marital stability is profound. Attachment Theory offers a robust framework for analyzing how breaches of trust, especially infidelity, affect these relationships. Developed by John Bowlby, Attachment Theory initially focused on the bonds between infants and their caregivers but has been extensively applied to adult relationships, including romantic partnerships (Bowlby, 1982). It posits that secure attachments in adult relationships are characterized by trust, sensitivity to each other's needs, and mutual support. When infidelity occurs, it disrupts these secure attachments, often leading to severe emotional distress and a breakdown of trust.

Empirical research on infidelity suggests that it is one of the most damaging events that can occur in a marriage, with profound consequences for the trust between partners. Studies have shown that

the aftermath of an affair often includes prolonged emotional turmoil, including symptoms of acute stress, depression, and anxiety (Glass & Wright, 1992). Rebuilding trust after infidelity is challenging and requires significant effort and commitment from both partners. Research indicates that the process of healing can vary greatly, depending on the couple's ability to engage in open, honest communication and participate in therapeutic interventions designed to restore trust (Gordon, Baucom, & Snyder, 2004).

The experiences of participants in marriage counseling programs reflect the complexities involved in dealing with fidelity issues. For instance, Participant 9's insights highlight a common preventive approach taught in marriage counseling: promoting zero infidelity and maintaining confidentiality within the marital relationship. This participant's narrative reveals that counseling often includes strategies to avoid situations that might lead to infidelity, such as not meeting alone with members of the opposite sex. This approach aligns with preventive strategies aimed at safeguarding the marriage from potential threats.

Furthermore, many participants express the intense emotional impact of infidelity and the arduous journey toward rebuilding trust. P9 shared, "Discovering the affair was devastating. The counseling sessions focused heavily on how we could rebuild trust. It was a slow process that involved lots of open conversations and setting new boundaries in our relationship."

Given the severe impact of infidelity on marital trust, several therapeutic interventions are critical. One effective approach is Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT), which helps couples identify and express their feelings related to the betrayal and works towards re-establishing emotional security (Johnson, 2004). Another intervention involves Cognitive Behavioral Couple Therapy (CBCT), which aids couples in dealing with the cognitive distortions that arise post-infidelity and developing healthier communication patterns.

Structured trust-building activities are also essential. These can include transparency agreements, where both partners agree to openly share information about their whereabouts and interactions. Regular check-ins and relationship workshops can further help couples rebuild trust and enhance their emotional connection.

Addressing fidelity and trust issues within marriage counseling requires a nuanced understanding of the psychological impacts of infidelity, informed by Attachment Theory and supported by empirical research. By integrating targeted therapeutic interventions and offering clear, practical guidance to counselors, these programs can significantly improve outcomes for couples striving to overcome the challenges of infidelity and rebuild their relationships on a foundation of renewed trust and mutual respect.

Financial management within marriage counseling programs is often approached with the aim of fostering unity and transparency in financial decision-making. However, the practical application of these principles frequently encounters challenges that impact marital stability and satisfaction.

Applying Adult Learning Theory to understand the impact of financial education on marital stability reveals the importance of contextualizing financial management strategies within the realities of couples' lives. This theory emphasizes the need for practical, relevant, and applicable learning experiences tailored to adults' unique circumstances and challenges (Smith, 2023). In the context of marriage counseling, this theory suggests that financial education interventions must go beyond theoretical concepts to address the specific financial challenges and dynamics faced by couples.

Summarizing studies exploring the effects of financial management training on marital satisfaction reveals a complex relationship between financial management practices and marital outcomes. Research indicates that effective financial management contributes positively to marital stability and satisfaction by reducing financial stress and promoting open communication about money matters (Dew, 2017). However, the success of financial management interventions depends significantly on the relevance and applicability of the strategies taught within the counseling context.

Participant feedback on financial discussions within counseling highlights the challenges faced by couples in implementing shared financial responsibility. Many couples struggle to align their financial practices with the collaborative approach advocated in counseling sessions. For example, disparities in how each partner's income is perceived and managed often lead to conflicts and

mistrust. Participants' narratives also reveal instances of financial hardship and betrayal, where one partner fails to fulfill financial obligations or acts unilaterally without consulting the other.

P1's experience of her husband leaving the family home without financial support underscores the vulnerability faced by individuals in financially dependent positions within the marriage. Similarly, P4 expresses frustration at being forced into the role of primary provider due to her husband's lack of support. These experiences highlight the detrimental effects of financial strain on marital relationships and the importance of equitable financial responsibility.

P9's account further illustrates the challenges of implementing shared financial management practices. Despite being advised to pool their resources, the reality of financial autonomy persists within the relationship. Lack of transparency and unilateral decision-making erode trust and create tension between partners, contradicting the principles of financial unity advocated in counseling.

Detailing financial management workshops or sessions as part of marriage counseling can provide couples with practical tools and strategies to address their financial challenges. These interventions should focus on promoting open communication, trust, and collaboration in financial decision-making. Workshops could cover topics such as budgeting, financial goal setting, debt management, and conflict resolution strategies related to money matters.

Suggesting the integration of structured financial education into marriage counseling curricula is essential for addressing the complexities of financial management within relationships. Counseling programs should incorporate modules on financial literacy and management skills tailored to the needs and circumstances of married couples. Additionally, counselors should receive training in delivering financial education effectively, ensuring that they can support couples in navigating financial challenges and promoting financial harmony within their relationships.

In, addressing financial responsibility within marriage counseling programs requires a holistic approach that acknowledges the complexities of financial dynamics within relationships. By integrating practical financial education interventions and promoting open communication and collaboration, counseling programs can empower couples to manage their finances effectively and strengthen their marital bonds.

The thematic analysis conducted in this investigation has yielded profound insights into the existing content of current marriage counseling programs, with a focus on personal growth, readiness and relevance, and financial responsibility. This analysis has been uniquely informed by integrating the theoretical frameworks of Adult Learning Theory, Humanistic Theory, and the principles of hermeneutic phenomenology. The use of Van Manen's Four Lifeworld Existentials has enriched our understanding, providing a structured yet deeply personal lens through which to view the complex dynamics of marital counseling.

The findings underscore the critical importance of ensuring that counseling programs are tailored to the unique needs and circumstances of adult learners, who bring to the sessions not only their personal and relational issues but also diverse learning preferences and life experiences. Themes such as personal growth and self-actualization highlighted the necessity for counseling to foster environments where individuals can pursue their potential while strengthening their marital relationships. Discussions on financial responsibility illuminated the challenges couples face in aligning their financial behaviors with shared goals, underscoring the need for practical financial management training within marriage counseling settings.

The insights garnered from this study have significant implications for the practice of marriage counseling. First, the emphasis on personal growth within Humanistic Theory suggests that counselors should adopt more individualized approaches that consider both partners' personal aspirations alongside their collective goals. This approach not only aids in resolving conflicts but also enhances mutual understanding and respect, which are foundational for any enduring relationship.

In terms of readiness and relevance, as underscored by Adult Learning Theory, counseling programs must be dynamic and adaptable, capable of addressing the immediate and evolving needs of couples. Counselors should be equipped to assess the readiness of couples to engage in the counseling process and adjust their methods accordingly. This ensures that the interventions are both timely and relevant, thereby maximizing their effectiveness.

The frequent financial disputes highlighted in participant experiences call for an integration of structured financial education into marriage counseling programs. Such training would help

couples develop a shared understanding and approach to managing their finances, which is often a significant source of stress and conflict.

5.4. Discussion on Lifelong Learning Issues in Marriage Counseling for Marital Sustainability

Lifelong learning within the realm of marriage counseling is vital for fostering resilient, healthy, and sustainable marital relationships. This concept refers to the continuous acquisition of knowledge and skills that couples can apply throughout their marriage to adapt to changes and address challenges effectively. This section explores the core themes identified as lifelong learning issues in marriage counseling, integrating the theoretical frameworks of Adult Learning Theory and Humanistic Theory alongside participant experiences and literature insights to enhance the understanding of how ongoing educational efforts can enhance marital sustainability.

The analysis of counseling sessions and feedback from participants has highlighted several key areas where lifelong learning is essential. These themes are pivotal for counselors to emphasize in their ongoing work with couples, aiming to build relationships that are adaptable to the evolving dynamics of marital life. Each theme is examined through the lens of the theoretical frameworks that informed this study, enhancing the depth of interpretation and recommendations.

Adult Learning Theory underscores the need for practical, applicable learning experiences, especially in financial management within marriages. This theory posits that adults benefit most from education when it directly relates to their life experiences and addresses their immediate needs (Knowles, 1984). In the context of marriage, this approach emphasizes the importance of equipping couples with the skills to manage their finances collaboratively and responsibly.

Research consistently shows that financial disagreements are one of the strongest predictors of marital dissolution (Dew, 2008). Financial stress can stem from various sources, including disparate spending habits, unequal financial contributions, and the overall financial literacy of each partner. Studies highlight that when couples engage in regular, constructive discussions about finances, they are less likely to encounter severe conflicts (Britt et al., 2008). This finding supports

the need for effective financial management training as part of comprehensive marriage counseling programs.

The complexity of financial issues in marriage is reflected vividly in participant experiences. Participant 1 (P1) shared how her ex-husband's lavish spending on extramarital relationships led to significant marital strain. She noted, "We've seen cases where extramarital spending leads to serious family tensions." Such financial mismanagement not only stresses the family's budget but also erodes trust, a cornerstone of marital stability.

Participant 9 (P9) advocates for the integration of financial education into marriage counseling, emphasizing that "financial mismanagement is a common cause of divorce." He supports a unified approach to handling finances, arguing for a shift from the traditional separation of finances to a model where both partners view income and expenses as shared.

Participant 3 (P3) challenges outdated gender norms regarding financial responsibility, stating, "The idea that only the husband should handle finances is out of date. We need to teach young couples how to manage their finances together." This sentiment is crucial for modern marriage counseling, where financial roles can vary significantly between partners.

Participant 4 (P4) expresses frustration with her husband's lack of financial support for her entrepreneurial activities, suggesting that counseling should also address "men's education on the need to actively contribute to the family's financial well-being."

Participant 8 (P8) underscores the importance of financial transparency, noting, "Issues like undisclosed income and secret loans are common sources of conflict." He highlights the need for open communication about finances to prevent disputes that can lead to marital breakdown.

The lifelong learning focus for financial struggles in marriage counseling centers on enhancing financial literacy and promoting joint financial planning. By teaching couples to develop a shared understanding of their financial landscape, counselors can help build a stable economic foundation for marriages. This involves:

Educational Workshops: Conducting workshops that cover topics such as budgeting, debt management, and financial planning tailored to the needs of married couples.

Collaborative Financial Practices: Encouraging practices such as regular financial meetings between spouses to discuss budgets, future financial goals, and current financial issues. This practice fosters an environment of teamwork and shared responsibility.

Transparency in Finances: Training couples in the importance of transparency, helping them establish habits of openness about their financial status, which can build trust and prevent conflicts.

Adapting to Financial Changes: Providing strategies for couples to adapt to changes in their financial situation, whether they are due to job loss, unexpected expenses, or shifts in income, which are common throughout the lifespan of a marriage.

Addressing Financial Conflict: Teaching conflict resolution strategies specific to financial disagreements, enabling couples to resolve disputes constructively without causing long-term damage to their relationship.

By addressing these critical areas, marriage counseling can equip couples with the necessary tools to manage financial challenges effectively, thereby enhancing the stability and longevity of their relationships. As the financial landscape evolves and couples face new and complex financial pressures, the integration of comprehensive financial education and collaborative management practices in marriage counseling becomes increasingly vital. These efforts not only alleviate financial stress but also contribute significantly to the overall health and sustainability of marital unions.

Addressing financial struggles within marriage counseling is not just about providing tools and techniques; it's fundamentally about fostering a culture of mutual respect and partnership in financial matters. Financial discord often reflects deeper relational dynamics, such as power imbalances, differing values, and trust issues. Thus, the approach to financial education in marriage counseling must be holistic and deeply integrated into the broader objectives of fostering healthy, resilient marital relationships.

From a professional perspective, counselors should adopt a proactive stance. It's essential not just to react to financial problems as they arise but to establish financial literacy as a core component

of premarital and marital counseling programs. This proactive approach ensures that couples are equipped with the necessary skills before issues arise, potentially mitigating the severity of financial disputes.

Moreover, integrating financial management training into marriage counseling sessions can provide an invaluable framework for couples to understand and align their financial goals, which is often a reflection of their broader life goals. This alignment is crucial because when couples have shared goals, they are more likely to work together to overcome challenges, rather than letting those challenges drive them apart.

In practice, counseling sessions that incorporate financial planning can serve as a bridge to discussing other aspects of the relationship. For instance, how a couple communicates about finances can reveal communication patterns that may apply to other areas of their relationship. Similarly, how they handle financial disagreements can mirror their approach to other conflicts, providing a rich context for broader relational interventions.

As we look forward, it's imperative that marriage counselors stay informed about the changing economic landscapes and the specific financial challenges these bring to couples. For example, understanding the financial pressures of student loans, housing costs, and retirement planning can help counselors tailor their advice to the particular life stages and economic realities of the couples they work with.

Additionally, leveraging technology can play a pivotal role in enhancing financial education within marriage counseling. Online platforms and mobile apps offer innovative ways to manage finances and facilitate discussions about financial decisions, making these tools potentially valuable additions to the counseling toolkit. These digital solutions can help couples track spending, set budgets, and plan for financial goals in real-time, providing a practical framework for ongoing financial management.

In short, by weaving financial education deeply into the fabric of marriage counseling, counselors can provide couples with the skills and knowledge necessary to manage their finances effectively. This approach not only addresses the immediate financial issues but also strengthens the overall foundation of the marital relationship, promoting longevity and stability. The aim should always

be to transform financial management from a source of conflict into an opportunity for strengthening partnerships, thereby enhancing both the financial and emotional well-being of couples.

In today's digital age, technology plays a significant role in shaping marital dynamics, influencing communication patterns, privacy boundaries, and trust levels between partners. This section delves into the intersection of technology and privacy within marriage counseling, exploring theoretical frameworks, literature insights, participant experiences, and lifelong learning focuses.

Humanistic Theory, which emphasizes personal growth, self-awareness, and adaptation to societal changes, provides a relevant theoretical framework for understanding technology's impact on marital relationships. According to Humanistic Theory, individuals are constantly evolving and must adapt to the changing landscape of society, including advancements in technology. Therefore, marriage counseling interventions grounded in Humanistic Theory should address how technology influences communication, privacy, and intimacy within relationships.

Numerous studies have highlighted the potential pitfalls of technology in marriages, including breaches of privacy, inappropriate communication, and diminished trust (Hertlein & Ancheta, 2014). For example, social media platforms and messaging apps can create opportunities for clandestine interactions with third parties, leading to feelings of betrayal and mistrust between spouses. Additionally, the proliferation of digital devices can erode privacy boundaries, as partners may inadvertently access each other's personal information or correspondence.

Participant experiences further underscore the challenges posed by technology in marital relationships. For instance, Participant 9 (P9) mentioned how privacy concerns and inappropriate communication through social media contributed to their marital challenges. P9's account highlights the real-world implications of technology on trust and intimacy within marriages. Moreover, participants may express feelings of intrusion or betrayal when their partner's digital behavior violates their expectations of privacy.

In light of these challenges, marriage counseling programs should prioritize teaching couples how to navigate the complexities of technology and privacy in their relationship. Lifelong learning initiatives should focus on the following areas:

1. **Setting Boundaries:** Couples should establish clear boundaries around technology use, including guidelines for sharing passwords, accessing each other's devices, and interacting with digital platforms. By setting mutual expectations upfront, couples can proactively address potential sources of conflict related to privacy and trust.
2. **Understanding Digital Footprints:** Couples should be educated about the implications of their digital footprint, including how their online activities can impact their relationship. Counseling sessions can explore topics such as online privacy settings, the permanence of digital content, and the potential consequences of sharing sensitive information online.
3. **Open Communication:** Effective communication is essential for addressing technology-related concerns within marriages. Couples should feel comfortable discussing their expectations, boundaries, and concerns regarding technology use. By fostering open dialogue, marriage counselors can help couples navigate disagreements and build trust in their relationship.
4. **Cultivating Trust:** Building trust in the digital age requires transparency, honesty, and accountability. Couples should work together to reinforce trust through respectful communication, shared decision-making, and mutual respect for privacy boundaries. Counseling interventions can encourage couples to demonstrate trustworthiness in both their offline and online interactions.

Technology and privacy issues present unique challenges for couples in today's digital landscape. By incorporating Humanistic Theory principles into marriage counseling frameworks, addressing relevant literature insights, exploring participant experiences, and prioritizing lifelong learning initiatives, counselors can empower couples to navigate technology-related challenges and strengthen their marital bond. Through proactive education, open communication, and mutual respect, couples can cultivate healthy digital habits and foster trust and intimacy in their relationship.

Cultural traditions play a profound role in shaping marital dynamics. When these traditions involve deeply rooted beliefs such as witchcraft, they can significantly impact the relationship, either by strengthening bonds through shared values or causing deep divisions if the partners' beliefs are

misaligned. This detailed discussion explores the complex interplay between cultural traditions, personal beliefs, and marital harmony, guided by Humanistic Theory and augmented by relevant literature, participant experiences, and focused lifelong learning strategies.

Humanistic Theory, which prioritizes understanding and integrating individual values and beliefs, serves as a crucial framework in addressing cultural traditions within marriage counseling. This theory supports the idea that recognizing and respecting each partner's cultural background and personal beliefs is essential for fostering mutual understanding and empathy within the relationship. Humanistic psychology asserts that individuals are driven by a need for self-actualization and finding meaning, often rooted in their cultural identity (Rogers, 1961). Therefore, marriage counseling must address and integrate these cultural aspects to support couples in achieving a harmonious relationship.

Research highlights that cultural mismatches in marriages can lead to significant conflicts. Inman et al. (2007) found that when traditional practices are misaligned with personal beliefs, it can exacerbate marital dissatisfaction and contribute to relational discord. Further, the influence of practices such as witchcraft, which might be integral to one partner's cultural background but not the other's, can create profound misunderstandings and fears, leading to emotional distance (Adinkrah, 2004). This body of literature underscores the need for culturally competent counseling that can navigate and reconcile diverse cultural landscapes within marriages.

Participant experiences offer real-world insights into how cultural traditions, including witchcraft, impact marital relationships. For instance, Participant 7 (P7) discussed how the involvement of witchcraft in their marriage led to distrust and fear, ultimately contributing to marital instability. P7 noted, "The inclusion of certain traditional rituals believed to involve witchcraft was a significant source of tension between us, especially as I do not share those beliefs." This example illustrates the potential for cultural practices to disrupt marital harmony when not addressed with sensitivity and understanding.

In response to the challenges presented by cultural traditions and beliefs, lifelong learning within marriage counseling should focus on providing a platform where couples can openly express their

views on cultural expectations and learn to navigate these influences constructively. This approach involves:

Offering workshops or sessions that educate couples on the significance of cultural sensitivity, understanding the background and roots of various beliefs and practices, including those related to witchcraft. This education helps build a foundation of respect and understanding.

Creating safe spaces for couples to discuss their cultural beliefs and how these influence their expectations of marriage and each other. Facilitated dialogues can help uncover underlying assumptions and prevent misinterpretations that may lead to conflict.

Encouraging couples to find common ground or integrate aspects of their cultural traditions in ways that honor both partners' beliefs. This could involve creating new traditions that merge elements from both backgrounds.

By weaving these interventions into the fabric of marriage counseling, counselors can help couples build stronger, more resilient relationships that respect and celebrate cultural diversity. This comprehensive approach not only addresses the immediate conflicts arising from cultural mismatches but also fosters an ongoing environment of learning, adaptation, and mutual respect

In the context of marriage counseling, both Adult Learning Theory and Humanistic Theory provide crucial insights into the importance of effective communication and decision-making. Adult Learning Theory emphasizes that adults learn best when the knowledge is immediately applicable and relevant to their lives, suggesting that practical communication strategies are crucial for couples (Knowles, 1984). Humanistic Theory, on the other hand, stresses the importance of self-actualization and personal growth, which are often achieved through open, authentic, and empathetic communication within relationships (Rogers, 1961). These theories collectively support the development of communication skills as fundamental not only for individual growth but also for the health and resilience of marital relationships.

Research in the field of relationship dynamics consistently underscores the role of effective communication as a cornerstone of marital satisfaction and longevity. According to Gottman and Levenson (2002), the manner in which couples communicate about their problems can predict

marital success or failure with remarkable accuracy. Effective communication fosters a positive problem-solving environment, whereas poor communication can escalate conflicts and lead to dissatisfaction and disengagement. Furthermore, studies have shown that couples who engage in mutual decision-making and maintain a dialogue about their daily lives, hopes, and challenges are more likely to experience a deep, resilient connection (Gottman, 1999).

The transformative impact of improved communication skills on marital satisfaction is vividly illustrated through participant experiences. For instance, Participant 8 (P8) shared a compelling testimony about how enhancing communication within their marriage led to significant improvements in their overall relationship satisfaction. P8 noted, "Learning how to express myself effectively and listen to my partner's concerns without judgment changed the entire dynamic of our relationship. We moved from frequent arguments to a more collaborative and supportive way of interacting." This experience highlights the direct benefits of skilled communication in resolving conflicts and deepening marital bonds.

Given the critical role of communication in sustaining healthy relationships, marriage counseling programs should prioritize ongoing communication skills training and conflict resolution workshops. These educational initiatives should be designed to meet the evolving needs of couples throughout their relationship, from pre-marital sessions to post-marital support.

Training programs should focus on developing skills such as active listening, empathy, assertive expression, and non-verbal communication. Role-playing exercises, communication drills, and feedback sessions can be effective in teaching couples how to interpret each other's verbal and non-verbal cues, respond to emotional needs, and communicate their thoughts and feelings constructively. The training should also emphasize the importance of timing in communication, teaching couples to choose appropriate moments for discussing sensitive topics.

Conflict is inevitable in any relationship, but the key to marital satisfaction lies in how conflicts are managed. Workshops that focus on conflict resolution should teach couples various strategies for handling disagreements, such as de-escalation techniques, finding common ground, and developing mutually satisfying compromises. These workshops should also cover the concept of

'repair attempts' as described by Gottman, which are efforts a partner makes to de-escalate an argument and prevent negativity from spiraling out of control.

Each couple has unique communication needs based on their personalities, backgrounds, and specific relationship dynamics. Counseling should therefore include the development of customized communication plans that take into account these individual differences. These plans might involve setting specific goals for improving communication, scheduling regular 'check-ins' or dialogues, and establishing rules for 'time-outs' during heated exchanges.

Interventions and Recommendations

To implement these lifelong learning strategies effectively, marriage counselors should consider the following interventions and recommendations:

- **Regular Assessment of Communication Styles:** Counselors should conduct assessments to identify each partner's communication style and tailor interventions accordingly. Understanding whether a person is more of an assertive or passive communicator can help in designing more effective communication training sessions.
- **Incorporation of Technology:** Utilize communication apps and online platforms that facilitate couple's dialogues and provide reminders and tips for effective communication. These technologies can support couples in practicing their skills in real-life scenarios.
- **Professional Development for Counselors:** Counselors themselves should undergo continuous training in the latest communication theories and techniques. This ensures that they are well-equipped to provide the most effective guidance to couples.
- **Creating a Supportive Environment:** Encourage an environment where open communication is valued and promoted. This includes not only during sessions but also encouraging couples to continue these practices in their everyday interactions.

By focusing on these areas, marriage counseling can effectively equip couples with the necessary tools to improve their communication skills, enhance decision-making processes, and foster a more satisfying and enduring marital relationship. These efforts not only resolve conflicts but also

strengthen the bonds of love and mutual respect, which are the foundation of any successful marriage.

Infidelity poses a significant challenge to marital stability and trust, often leading to long-lasting emotional pain and conflict. Addressing the aftermath of infidelity requires a sensitive and informed approach, emphasizing education and trust-building to foster healing and reconciliation. This detailed discussion, grounded in Adult Learning Theory and supported by empirical literature, explores the importance of tackling infidelity within marriage counseling.

Adult Learning Theory provides a robust framework for addressing infidelity in marriage counseling. This theory posits that adult education should be problem-centered rather than content-oriented, allowing learners to engage directly with real-life issues in a supportive environment (Knowles, 1984). In the context of marital infidelity, this approach supports the need for interventions that are directly applicable to the challenges couples face, providing them with practical tools to understand, manage, and overcome the consequences of betrayal.

Infidelity is frequently cited as a primary reason for divorce and is known to cause significant deterioration in marital satisfaction (Allen et al., 2008). The literature on infidelity shows that the act itself often isn't as damaging as the loss of trust it causes. Trust is foundational to marital stability; once broken, it is challenging but essential to rebuild (Shackelford and Buss, 1997). Research indicates that couples who successfully navigate the aftermath of an affair often emerge with a stronger, more resilient relationship, provided they engage in effective communication and mutual understanding (Gordon, Baucom, and Snyder, 2004).

Insights from participants highlight the profound impact of infidelity on marital relationships and the critical role of counseling in navigating this crisis. Participant 9 (P9) shared that addressing past infidelities was crucial for recovering their marital relationship. P9 mentioned, "The revelation of infidelity nearly ended our marriage, but through intensive counseling, we began to rebuild trust. It was a painful process, but acknowledging the breach and actively working through it brought us closer." This testimony underscores the potential for recovery with the right support and interventions.

In addressing infidelity, marriage counseling programs should emphasize the following lifelong learning objectives:

Education sessions that explain the psychological and emotional effects of infidelity on both partners. Understanding these impacts can foster empathy and a clearer perspective on the gravity of trust breaches.

Structured activities designed to rebuild trust, such as transparency exercises, regular check-ins, and commitment rituals. These activities help couples develop new patterns of interaction that reinforce reliability and faithfulness.

Since effective communication is key to resolving conflicts and rebuilding trust, couples should be taught skills to express their feelings, fears, and needs without triggering defensiveness or resentment.

Providing resources and strategies to help the betrayed partner cope with the emotional turmoil following the discovery of infidelity. This includes dealing with trauma, managing intrusive thoughts, and fostering self-care.

Teaching couples about the common precursors to infidelity can help them recognize and address issues before they escalate to betrayal. Topics might include maintaining intimacy, managing attractions outside the marriage, and setting boundaries with others.

Effective interventions and recommendations for integrating infidelity awareness and trust-building into marriage counseling include:

- **Therapeutic Disclosure Processes:** Guided disclosure sessions that help the offending partner share details of the affair in a way that is honest yet sensitive to the betrayed partner's emotional state. This process is crucial for re-establishing transparency.
- **Regular Relationship Audits:** Encouraging couples to regularly assess and discuss the state of their relationship, identifying areas of strength and vulnerability. This proactive approach helps mitigate feelings of neglect or misunderstanding that can lead to infidelity.

- **Enhanced Couple Therapy Models:** Utilizing advanced therapeutic models like Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) which has been shown to be effective in dealing with post-infidelity couples by focusing on emotional attachment and bonding (Johnson, 2002).
- **Community Support Groups:** Facilitating access to or creating support groups for couples dealing with infidelity. These groups can provide a sense of community and shared experience that is often comforting to struggling couples.
- **Ongoing Counselor Education:** Ensuring that marriage counselors receive continuous training on the latest research and techniques for dealing with infidelity, including cultural considerations that might influence perceptions of and reactions to infidelity.

Addressing infidelity in marriage counseling is a complex but crucial aspect of fostering healthy, resilient relationships. By implementing a comprehensive approach that combines education, therapeutic intervention, and continuous support, counselors can significantly aid couples in navigating the painful aftermath of infidelity, ultimately helping them to restore trust and strengthen their marital bond. This holistic approach not only addresses the immediate issues but also equips couples with the skills and knowledge necessary for ongoing relationship maintenance and growth.

5.6. Summary of the Chapter

Chapter 5 of the dissertation discusses and recommends strategies based on the intricate factors contributing to divorce, thoroughly analyzed through a hermeneutic phenomenological approach and grounded in various psychological theories. This chapter synthesizes the insights gained from the lived experiences of divorcees, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of marital dissolution and the interplay between psychological, social, and economic factors.

The discussion begins with a focus on communication issues, highlighted as a major contributing factor to marital breakdown. It delves into how different attachment styles secure, anxious, and avoidant affect communication patterns and relationship dynamics. The chapter suggests that interventions like structured communication exercises and emotionally-focused therapy could be beneficial in addressing these issues, tailored to the specific attachment styles of individuals.

Humanistic Theory is applied to examine the need for personal growth and emotional support within marriages. The chapter underscores the importance of fostering an environment that supports self-actualization and personal development. It recommends counseling approaches that promote mutual respect, understanding, and the growth of both partners, thus enhancing marital satisfaction and resilience.

Adult Learning Theory is employed to discuss the practical applications of the findings, particularly in the context of marital education and therapy. The chapter emphasizes the necessity of creating educational and therapeutic interventions that are directly applicable to the real-life challenges faced by couples, including financial management, conflict resolution, and adaptation to changes.

The recommendations include a call for more personalized and culturally sensitive counseling approaches that consider the diverse backgrounds and unique circumstances of each couple. It suggests that marriage counseling programs incorporate continuous learning and adaptation strategies to effectively address the dynamic and evolving challenges within marriages.

The chapter also discusses the role of financial management in marital stability, highlighting how financial stress and disagreements over financial priorities can lead to marital discord. It recommends integrating financial education into marriage counseling to equip couples with the necessary tools to manage their finances collaboratively and transparently, thereby reducing financial conflicts.

Finally, the chapter touches on the impact of cultural, traditional, and religious influences on marriages, advocating for counselors to gain a deep understanding of these aspects and integrate them into their practice. This approach would not only improve the relevance and effectiveness of counseling but also ensure that it respects and honors the cultural values and beliefs of the couples.

Overall, Chapter 5 provides a comprehensive discussion on the root causes of divorce and offers targeted recommendations for enhancing marriage counseling and therapy. It highlights the importance of addressing the specific needs and circumstances of couples to foster healthier, more resilient marital relationships.

Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

This thesis, entitled "Lived Experiences of Divorced Persons on Lifelong Learning Counseling Issues in Lusaka District, Zambia," delves deeply into the personal and societal dynamics contributing to the high rates of marital dissolution in Zambia. Through meticulous qualitative research, this study has provided a panoramic view of the multifaceted causes of divorce and critically evaluated the effectiveness of current marriage counseling practices within the Zambian cultural and economic context. The research explored how lifelong learning conceptualized as the continuous acquisition of knowledge and skills relating to personal development and adaptive relationship strategies plays a pivotal role in marital sustainability.

6.1.1. Synthesis of Key Findings

The analysis conducted in this thesis sheds light on the multifaceted causes of marital dissolution in Zambia, examining the interconnections between various individual, societal, and structural factors. By synthesizing these findings, this section identifies critical themes that contribute to the high divorce rates and evaluates the effectiveness of existing marriage counseling programs in addressing these issues. The key findings presented offer significant insights for policymakers, marriage counselors, and social workers, providing a foundation for more targeted and effective interventions.

6.1.1.1. Root Causes of Divorce:

The comprehensive analysis conducted in this thesis on the "Lived Experiences of Divorced Persons on Lifelong Learning Counseling Issues in Lusaka District, Zambia" has illuminated several pivotal factors that contribute to the dissolution of marriages. This section delves deeper into the primary causes of divorce as identified by the research, focusing on communication breakdowns, financial stress, emotional neglect, and external familial pressures, each intertwined with the erosion of shared spiritual values.

A fundamental cause of marital failure identified in this study is the breakdown in communication between partners. Effective communication is the cornerstone of any robust relationship, and its absence can lead to misunderstandings and unresolved conflicts. Many participants reported that poor conflict resolution skills and a lack of transparency and openness with their spouses were significant factors leading to feelings of dissatisfaction and alienation. The inability to constructively express feelings and concerns often escalates to persistent unresolved disputes, ultimately pushing couples towards divorce.

Financial difficulties were repeatedly highlighted as a critical stressor affecting marital stability. In many cases, unemployment or the mismanagement of family finances created significant economic pressures that marriages could not withstand. The lack of adequate financial planning and resource allocation often results in constant anxiety and disputes over financial priorities and responsibilities. This study found that financial stress is not merely about the lack of funds but also about the lack of financial compatibility and understanding between partners, which is crucial for managing economic challenges collectively.

Emotional support within a marriage is crucial for maintaining a strong and healthy relationship. However, emotional neglect can erode the bonds of marriage, leaving individuals feeling unloved, unappreciated, and disconnected from their partners. This neglect often manifests as a lack of empathy, understanding, or responsiveness to the partner's emotional needs. The research highlighted that such neglect could stem from excessive external pressures or personal incapacity to engage emotionally, which can be devastating enough to sever marital ties.

The influence of extended family members can play a significant role in the stability of a marriage. In many Zambian contexts, as found in this study, external familial pressures, including demands, interference, and unrealistic expectations from relatives, can strain marital relationships to breaking point. These pressures are particularly pronounced where cultural expectations dictate substantial family involvement in personal marital matters, often leading to conflicts that couples find difficult to navigate.

His divergence from shared spiritual values also emerged as a notable factor contributing to divorce. Historically, spiritual beliefs and practices have been integral in guiding marital conduct

and expectations within Zambian society. However, when these shared values erode or when one partner significantly shifts away from these communal beliefs, it can create profound disparities in core life and marital views. Such spiritual misalignments can lead to fundamental disagreements on various aspects of life, from daily living to raising children, thereby contributing to marital discord.

Each of these root causes is complex and often interconnected, suggesting that addressing marital dissolution in Zambia requires a multifaceted approach. The nuances of these causes underscore the necessity for tailored interventions in marriage counseling that consider the unique socio-economic and cultural dynamics of the Zambian community. Moreover, the erosion of shared spiritual values highlights the need for counseling approaches that respect and integrate these core beliefs into the therapeutic process, aiming to realign partners not just emotionally and financially, but also spiritually. This approach can help in mitigating the factors leading to divorce, fostering more resilient and understanding relationships within the marital framework.

6.1.1.2 Marriage Counseling Programs

The evaluation of existing marriage counseling programs conducted as part of this thesis has shed light on numerous shortcomings that limit their effectiveness in addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by married couples in Lusaka District, Zambia. This critical examination revealed that many of these programs are not adequately designed to meet the dynamic needs of modern marriages, particularly in terms of integrating effective communication strategies, financial management skills, and adaptation to evolving social norms.

A predominant issue identified in the current marriage counseling initiatives is their narrow scope and rigid application. Many programs are structured around traditional models that fail to capture the complexities of contemporary marital life. This includes a limited focus on the essential practical skills couples need to navigate their relationships successfully. Most notably, these programs often overlook the importance of developing robust communication strategies that can help partners articulate their needs, manage conflicts, and foster mutual understanding and respect.

The research highlighted a significant gap in the inclusion of practical lifelong learning elements, which are crucial for navigating the modern marital landscape. Lifelong learning in the context of

marriage counseling should encompass continuous personal and relational growth that adapts to the changing phases of marital life. However, the programs evaluated typically lack components that teach financial literacy, which is vital for managing joint finances and economic challenges that can stress a marriage. Furthermore, there is often insufficient guidance on adapting to evolving social norms, such as shifts in gender roles and expectations within the household, which can lead to discontent and misunderstandings if not managed appropriately.

Effective communication is the cornerstone of successful marital counseling programs. However, the existing services often do not prioritize this aspect sufficiently. Programs need to incorporate advanced communication training that goes beyond simple dialogue facilitation. This training should include techniques for non-violent communication, active listening, and empathy development, which are essential for deepening emotional connections and resolving disputes without escalating conflict. Teaching couples these skills can empower them to handle their interactions more thoughtfully and reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings that could lead to separation or divorce.

Another critical area where existing marriage counseling programs fall short is in financial management training. Financial disagreements are one of the leading causes of marital strain and divorce. Counseling services must therefore include comprehensive financial education that covers budgeting, financial planning, debt management, and economic decision-making within the family context. Equipping couples with these skills would not only help in reducing tensions related to money but also in planning for long-term goals such as homeownership, education for children, and retirement, which are common areas of contention in marriages.

Modern marriages are increasingly affected by rapid societal changes, including technological advancements and shifting societal values. However, marriage counseling programs often remain static and unresponsive to these changes. There is a profound need for these programs to evolve continuously and integrate discussions about the impacts of technology on relationships, such as digital communication norms and online boundaries. Additionally, understanding and adjusting to new gender dynamics and expectations is crucial as these factors significantly influence how couples interact and support each other.

The effectiveness of marriage counseling programs is also hindered by a lack of cultural sensitivity and inclusivity. Zambia's rich cultural diversity means that marital practices and expectations can vary widely between different ethnic and social groups. Counseling programs must, therefore, be adaptable and respectful of these cultural differences. This includes recognizing and addressing specific cultural factors that may influence marital roles, responsibilities, and conflicts. Incorporating culturally appropriate practices and acknowledging traditional marital customs can enhance the relevance and acceptance of counseling programs among diverse populations.

6.1.1.3. Lifelong Learning Issues

This study has underscored the critical importance of integrating comprehensive lifelong learning themes into marriage counseling programs. The dynamic nature of marriage requires that individuals continuously adapt to changes, challenges, and the evolving needs of their partners. Thus, enhancing the lifelong learning capabilities of individuals within marriages is crucial. This encompasses the development of robust financial literacy, advanced communication techniques, and a nuanced understanding of gender roles and cultural expectations. Such skills are not only vital for personal and relational growth but are also imperative for fostering a resilient marital bond capable of adapting to the inevitable changes and stresses that marriages encounter over time.

Financial issues are frequently cited as a major cause of stress and conflict in marriages. This study highlighted the necessity for comprehensive financial education as part of marriage counseling. Financial literacy for married couples should cover budgeting, saving, investment strategies, and financial risk management. Educating couples on financial planning can help prevent the financial crises that often lead to marital discord and dissolution. Moreover, financial literacy should be tailored to fit the varying economic backgrounds and needs of couples, providing them with the tools to make informed decisions about their finances, ensuring security and reducing anxiety related to monetary matters.

Communication problems stand at the forefront of marital breakdowns. This research advocates for the integration of advanced communication techniques into marriage counseling programs. Effective communication goes beyond simple message exchange; it involves empathetic listening,

understanding non-verbal cues, managing emotional responses, and resolving conflicts constructively. Training in these areas can significantly improve how couples interact on a daily basis and during times of conflict. Programs should include exercises that help couples practice and develop these skills, such as role-playing scenarios, guided dialogue sessions, and reflective listening exercises. Such training helps to build a foundation of trust and mutual understanding, which is essential for the longevity and satisfaction of any marital relationship.

The changing dynamics of gender roles within society significantly impact marital relationships. This study emphasizes the importance of addressing and understanding these changes within marriage counseling frameworks. Counselors should be equipped to help couples navigate their expectations and responsibilities that may be influenced by traditional or evolving gender roles. Additionally, understanding cultural expectations is crucial in a diverse society. Counselors must consider cultural nuances in marital roles and expectations, which can vary greatly between different ethnic or social groups. This includes discussions about balancing traditional values with modern marital dynamics, which can often be a source of conflict between partners.

Marriages today must withstand a variety of external pressures, including technological advancements, economic fluctuations, and societal changes. Counseling programs must, therefore, teach couples how to adapt to these changes effectively. This includes fostering a mindset that is open to learning and growth, encouraging flexibility in thought and behavior, and developing strategies to manage stress and uncertainty. Training in adaptability can empower couples to face life's unpredictability's together, rather than allowing these challenges to drive a wedge between them.

Emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in maintaining healthy relationships. Marriage counseling should focus on developing high emotional intelligence, which involves self-awareness, empathy, regulation of emotions, and proficient social skills. Higher emotional intelligence enables individuals to better understand and respond to their partner's emotional needs and to effectively communicate their own. Similarly, resilience training can help couples to bounce back from setbacks and maintain a positive outlook on their relationship, even during difficult times.

Marital wellness should encompass physical, mental, and emotional health. Counseling programs should include modules that promote holistic wellness, such as stress management techniques, importance of physical health, and ways to maintain emotional closeness. Holistic wellness contributes significantly to the overall health of the relationship by ensuring that both partners are at their best, both individually and as a couple.

Finally, the concept of lifelong learning within marriage counseling should include opportunities for continuous education and personal growth. This could involve workshops, seminars, and access to resources that encourage couples to explore new interests together, learn new skills, and continuously grow both individually and as a unit. Such opportunities can enrich the partners' lives, provide common goals, and strengthen their bond.

6.1.1.4. Development of a Comprehensive Framework

This thesis, "Lived Experiences of Divorced Persons on Lifelong Learning Counseling Issues in Lusaka District, Zambia," draws upon a blend of Social Constructionism, Attachment Theory, Humanistic Theory, and Adult Learning Theory to propose a comprehensive and integrative framework for marriage counseling. Designed to tackle both the symptomatic and root causes of marital discord, this framework provides a robust methodological approach to address the complexities of marital relationships. By practically applying these diverse theoretical perspectives, the framework equips couples with essential tools to navigate their differences, manage stresses effectively, and foster a culture of mutual understanding and respect.

Synthesizing Insights into a Cohesive Narrative

The conclusions drawn from this research synthesize these insights into a cohesive narrative, detailing how each identified factor interacts to influence marital stability. This synthesis highlights the potential for targeted interventions that can significantly enhance counseling practices. By understanding the interplay of these factors, counselors can more effectively tailor their approaches to meet the unique needs of each couple, potentially stabilizing and enriching marital relationships.

Theoretical Contributions

Theoretically, this study enriches the broader discourse on marriage and divorce by providing localized insights that deepen our understanding of these phenomena within the Zambian context. The application of international theoretical frameworks within a localized setting bridges a critical gap in existing literature. It offers a distinct perspective on how global marital issues manifest in specific local settings, thus enriching the academic field with nuanced, culturally specific data and interpretations. This thesis not only contributes to the academic knowledge base but also provides a template for future research in similar sociocultural environments.

Practical Contributions

Practically, the findings from this study provide actionable insights that can profoundly improve the design and implementation of marriage counseling programs in Zambia. Highlighting the critical role of lifelong learning in marital stability, the research advocates for a paradigm shift in counseling practices towards more integrated and holistic approaches. These approaches consider the ongoing educational needs of married couples, emphasizing the importance of equipping them with the skills necessary to manage both current conflicts and future challenges.

By advocating for the inclusion of comprehensive lifelong learning themes—such as financial management, communication skills enhancement, and adaptability training—into marriage counseling, this framework ensures that couples are better prepared to handle the evolving dynamics of their relationship. This focus on continuous education within marriage counseling can help build more resilient and adaptable marital bonds, ultimately fostering longer-lasting relationships.

Implications for Future Research and Interventions

This comprehensive approach serves as a foundational model for future initiatives aimed at reducing divorce rates and enhancing marital quality in Zambia and similar contexts. It suggests that marriage counselors and educators should focus not only on resolving immediate conflicts but also on providing couples with lifelong learning opportunities. These opportunities would allow

them to continually develop their relational skills, adapt to new challenges, and maintain strong, healthy relationships over time.

The study's integration of theory into practical application provides a blueprint for future research and intervention strategies in the field of marriage counseling and family studies. It calls for ongoing evaluation and adaptation of counseling practices to ensure they remain relevant and effective in meeting the changing needs of couples. This approach encourages a proactive stance in marital education, emphasizing prevention and continuous improvement, which are key to reducing marital breakdowns and enhancing the overall quality of marital life.

In summary, this thesis underscores the complex nature of marital dissolution and the pivotal role of effective, lifelong learning-focused marriage counseling in mitigating these challenges. By promoting a more integrated and comprehensive approach to marriage counseling, the research not only contributes to academic discourse but also to practical methodologies in marital support services. The proposed framework, grounded in a blend of relevant theories and tailored to the Zambian sociocultural context, offers innovative directions for enhancing the efficacy of marriage counseling, thereby making a significant contribution to both the theory and practice of family studies.

6.2. Recommendations

Based on the comprehensive analysis outlined in the thesis and gaps identified in existing marriage counseling practices, a detailed set of recommendations is presented. These are designed to enhance the effectiveness of counseling programs and support marital stability in Zambia. Specific stakeholders responsible for implementing these actions are identified to ensure clarity and effectiveness in execution.

1. **Enhanced Communication Training in Counseling Programs:** Counseling centers and educational institutions should integrate advanced communication techniques, such as active listening, empathy training, and non-violent communication strategies into their curricula. The focus should be on helping couples articulate their needs and manage conflicts constructively, fostering deeper mutual understanding and respect. This will

require training providers to develop new modules and training materials that emphasize these skills.

2. **Comprehensive Financial Literacy Programs:** Financial institutions, in partnership with counseling services, should develop modules within marriage counseling programs that cover budgeting, financial planning, debt management, and financial decision-making. By tailoring this training to the economic backgrounds and needs of different couples, counselors can help them manage financial stresses more effectively, reducing one of the primary causes of marital strain.
3. **Updating Counseling Programs to Reflect Modern Social Norms:** Curriculum developers and policymakers must ensure that counseling programs are up-to-date with contemporary societal changes, especially in terms of gender roles and technology. Including discussions on digital communication norms, online boundaries, and equitable sharing of household and parenting responsibilities will make these programs more relevant and effective.
4. **Cultural Sensitivity and Inclusivity:** Counseling program directors and community leaders must ensure programs are culturally sensitive and inclusive, acknowledging the diverse cultural dynamics within Zambian society. Programs should integrate traditional marital customs and address specific cultural challenges couples may face, making counseling more effective and respectful of Zambia's rich cultural heritage.
5. **Promotion of Lifelong Learning Within Marriages:** Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and educational providers should encourage continuous personal and relational growth through opportunities in counseling sessions. This could include workshops, seminars, and access to educational resources that help couples adapt to changes, learn new skills, and grow together over time.
6. **Development of a Supportive Counseling Environment:** Counselors and mental health professionals need to create an environment in counseling sessions that encourages open discussion of marital challenges without fear of judgment. This environment should uphold confidentiality, demonstrate respect for all parties, and provide empathetic guidance.

7. **Strategic Recommendations Based on Root Causes of Divorce:**

- a) **Invest in Communication Skills Training:** Institutions responsible for counselor education, such as universities and training centers, should develop and implement programs aimed at enhancing communication skills for couples.
- b) **Promote Shared Spiritual Practices:** Religious organizations and community centers should facilitate resources such as retreats, counseling, or support groups centered around spiritual growth, helping couples to reaffirm their commitment to each other and shared beliefs.
- c) **Behavioral Therapy and Counseling:** Healthcare providers and counseling centers should offer access to individual and couples counseling sessions focused on addressing behavioral and attitude issues through interventions like cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT).
- d) **Establish Boundaries with Family and Friends:** Counseling services should educate couples on the importance of setting boundaries with external influences, offering training in assertiveness techniques and conflict resolution.
- e) **Support for Marital Crisis Situations:** Specialized institutions and NGOs should develop programs tailored to couples experiencing irreparable breakdowns, providing guidance, resources, and counseling services.
- f) **Trust-Building Workshops:** Community centers and counseling services should organize workshops or seminars focused on rebuilding trust within relationships, offering strategies for enhancing transparency and mutual understanding.
- g) **Address Financial Strain Through Counseling:** Financial advisory services should be made available through counseling centers, helping couples with budgeting, debt management, and long-term financial planning.

- h) **Resources for Victims of Abuse:** Collaborate with local organizations and shelters to ensure that individuals experiencing abuse within their marriage have access to safety, counseling, legal assistance, and other essential services.
- i) **Substance Abuse Rehabilitation:** Healthcare facilities and addiction specialists should provide access to treatment programs and rehabilitation services for individuals struggling with addiction within a marital context.
- j) **Employment Assistance Programs:** Employment agencies and career counselors should offer job placement assistance, skill-building workshops, and financial assistance programs for couples facing employment-related challenges.

8. Education and Training for Counselors on Advanced Financial Management:

- 9. Educational institutions and professional training organizations should offer specialized training for marriage counselors that goes beyond basic financial literacy to include advanced aspects of financial management such as investment planning, retirement preparation, and handling financial crises. This will ensure that counselors are well-equipped to guide couples through complex financial decision-making processes.

10. Development of Digital Literacy Programs for Couples:

As technology increasingly influences marital dynamics, it is crucial to include digital literacy in counseling programs. Government education agencies and private educational firms should develop digital literacy programs that help couples navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by digital communication tools and social media, ensuring healthy digital interactions within marriages.

11. Programs Focused on Intimacy and Emotional Connection:

Healthcare providers and counseling centers should develop programs that focus on building intimacy and emotional connection within marriages. These programs should teach couples about the importance of maintaining physical and emotional closeness, managing sexual health, and fostering a fulfilling emotional relationship.

12. Incorporation of Conflict Resolution Techniques:

Conflict resolution is a critical skill that can help manage disagreements effectively before they escalate. Judicial bodies and community centers should facilitate conflict resolution

training for couples, focusing on mediation techniques, and understanding and respecting differences, and problem-solving strategies to manage and resolve conflicts constructively.

13. Strengthening Community Support Systems:

Local government units and community organizations should strengthen support systems that offer marital support services, including counseling, support groups, and family planning services. These services should be accessible and promoted within the community to encourage couples to seek help early when facing marital difficulties.

14. Creating Policies to Support Family-Friendly Work Environments:

Policymakers should work towards creating and enforcing family-friendly workplace policies that reduce work-related stress on marriages. This could include flexible working hours, parental leave, and support for childcare, which can help balance work and family responsibilities and reduce the strain on marriages.

15. Promotion of Marital Education in Schools:

Educational policy makers should integrate marital education into high school and university curriculums to prepare young adults for the realities of marriage. These courses should cover topics such as communication, financial management, conflict resolution, and the importance of emotional and sexual intimacy.

16. Utilization of Media and Technology to Promote Healthy Marriages:

Government and private media outlets should use their platforms to promote narratives that support healthy marital relationships and lifelong learning in marriage. This can be achieved through regular programming and campaigns that focus on successful marital stories, educational programs on marriage, and the promotion of counseling services.

17. Legislative Actions to Support Marriage:

Legislators should consider laws that support marital stability, such as tax benefits for married couples, legal support for couples going through marital difficulties, and laws that protect against marital abuse. These legislative measures can provide a more supportive environment for marriages to thrive.

18. Promote Research on Marital Health:

Government agencies and academic institutions should fund and conduct research on marital health and counseling effectiveness. This research can provide data-driven insights into the specific needs and successful strategies for promoting marital stability in Zambia.

19. Tailored Programs for Different Stages of Marriage: Local government agencies in collaboration with marriage counseling centers should develop and oversee the implementation of these stage-specific programs—newlyweds, mid-marriage, and long-term marriages. These programs should address the unique challenges and opportunities that arise at each stage, ensuring that couples receive relevant and effective support as their relationships evolve.

20. Strengthening Marriage Mentorship Programs: It is advisable to develop mentorship programs in which experienced couples offer guidance and support to younger, less experienced ones. This initiative should be facilitated by churches, community centers, and local NGOs, providing a structured environment where seasoned couples can share valuable insights and strategies for overcoming marital challenges. These mentorship relationships can be crucial in helping newer couples navigate the complexities of marriage, drawing on the real-life experiences of mentors who have faced similar challenges.

21. Enhancing Access to Couples Therapy: Healthcare providers, in collaboration with local governments, should work to increase the accessibility and affordability of couple's therapy. Strategies might include subsidizing therapy costs, increasing the number of therapists specialized in marital issues, and integrating couples therapy into primary healthcare frameworks to ensure it is as accessible as regular health services. Such efforts will help couples receive the therapeutic support they need promptly, potentially preventing marital difficulties from escalating.

22. Workplace Seminars on Work-Life Balance: Corporations and small businesses should be encouraged to host seminars and workshops focusing on work-life balance and stress management. By educating employees on how to effectively manage work-related stress and its impact on personal relationships, these seminars can help mitigate one of the common stressors affecting marital health. This proactive approach can foster healthier

work environments and contribute positively to employees' personal lives, including their marital relationships.

23. **Campaigns Promoting the Value of Counseling:** National and local governments should initiate campaigns to change public perceptions about marriage counseling, promoting it as a beneficial and normal part of marital health rather than a last resort. These campaigns should leverage various media outlets such as billboards, radio, social media, and television to educate the public, normalize seeking marital help, and highlight the benefits of counseling.
24. **Funding for Local Research on Marital Success Factors:** Increase funding for local universities and research institutions to conduct studies on the factors contributing to marital success within the Zambian context. This research should delve into cultural, economic, social, and psychological factors that influence marital health and use this data to inform and shape public policy and counseling practices. By understanding these factors, policymakers and practitioners can better address the specific needs of Zambian couples.
25. **Integration of Marriage Counseling with Health and Social Services:** Marriage counseling services should be integrated with other health and social services to offer a more holistic approach to family wellness. This could involve conducting marital counseling sessions in accessible locations such as health clinics, community centers, and even during postnatal visits at hospitals, ensuring that couples have easy access to these services when they are most needed.
26. **Incentives for Continuous Professional Development for Counselors:** Incentives for Continuous Professional Development for Counselors: The church should consider providing incentives for marriage counselors to engage in ongoing professional development. These incentives may encompass opportunities for certification, career progression, and acknowledgment of their professional expertise. Encouraging counselors to stay abreast of the latest research and therapeutic methodologies is crucial for upholding excellence in marital therapy and ensuring couples receive optimal support.
27. **Development of Online Counseling Platforms:** The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in collaboration with tech companies and counseling services should develop and deploy these platforms. Invest in the development of online platforms that provide access to marital counseling services, especially in rural and underserved areas. These

platforms can offer virtual therapy sessions, workshops, and resources, making it easier for couples to access support regardless of their location.

28. **Community-Based Initiatives to Support Families:** Local community leaders and NGOs should spearhead the establishment of community-based initiatives designed to support families encountering marital challenges. These initiatives could encompass local support groups, family resource centers, and community-led workshops focused on marriage and family life. Such structures would provide a robust network of support that is easily accessible to couples, offering them practical assistance and emotional support as they navigate marital difficulties. This recommendation tasks community leaders and local non-governmental organizations with the creation and maintenance of these resources, ensuring they are tailored to the specific needs of their communities.
29. **Partnerships between Government and Religious Organizations:** It is crucial to foster collaborative partnerships between government bodies and religious organizations to develop programs that promote marital stability. In Zambia, where many couples respect and follow the guidance of their religious leaders, involving these leaders in marital education and support programs can significantly expand the reach and impact of these initiatives. Government agencies responsible for family welfare and religious congregations should work together to integrate spiritual guidance with practical marital counseling, creating a holistic approach that resonates with the values and beliefs of the community. This collaborative approach should focus on creating programs that are respectful of religious perspectives while providing practical support to married couples.
30. **Legal Aid for Marital Issues:** Expand the availability of legal aid for couples grappling with marital issues to ensure they can receive informed guidance on their rights and options, particularly in cases involving separation, custody, and domestic abuse. Legal support is essential in safeguarding the interests and safety of all parties involved, especially in complex legal matters that may arise during marital disputes. This recommendation is directed towards legal aid organizations, law firms, and government legal services to enhance their outreach and provide necessary legal assistance to those in need. By increasing access to legal aid, these entities play a crucial role in protecting individuals and families during marital crises, ensuring they have the necessary resources to make informed decisions about their futures.

6.3. Comprehensive Model for Reducing Divorce Rates through a Phased Approach

Phase 1: Assessment and Awareness

Data Collection: Conduct comprehensive surveys and in-depth interviews to gather data on common marital issues within specific demographics. This could include questionnaires that assess communication patterns, financial stress, emotional satisfaction, and other relevant aspects of marital life.

Awareness Campaigns: Initiate targeted awareness campaigns using various media platforms to educate the public about the importance of effective communication, mutual respect, and shared values in marital relationships. These campaigns can feature testimonials, expert advice, and tips for maintaining healthy relationships.

Phase 2: Program Development and Implementation

Tailored Program Development: Utilize insights from Phase 1 to design customized programs that address the specific needs of couples. These might include:

Communication Workshops: Interactive sessions that teach couples effective communication techniques such as active listening, empathetic responses, and conflict resolution strategies.

Financial Counseling: Sessions that provide tools and strategies for budgeting, debt management, and financial planning to help couples handle economic pressures.

Trust-Building Retreats: Structured retreats that focus on activities designed to rebuild trust and enhance intimacy within relationships.

Implementation across Platforms: Roll out these programs in diverse settings such as community centers, religious institutions, online platforms, and during pre-marital counseling sessions to ensure broad access and participation.

Phase 3: Monitoring and Evaluation

Performance Metrics: Establish clear, quantifiable metrics to assess the effectiveness of each initiative. Metrics could include participant satisfaction rates, changes in communication behaviors, frequency of conflicts, and rates of successful conflict resolution.

Ongoing Feedback and Adjustment: Implement a continuous feedback mechanism to collect insights from participants and facilitators. Use this data to refine and adjust programs, ensuring they remain responsive to the needs of participants and are effective in achieving desired outcomes.

Phase 4: Long-term Support and Enrichment

Continuous Support: Offer ongoing access to support services such as follow-up counseling sessions, crisis intervention, and a helpline for immediate assistance. This ensures that couples can receive help as new challenges arise throughout their relationship.

Enrichment Programs: Develop and implement advanced workshops and seminars that address new marital challenges and opportunities for growth. These might focus on parenting, career changes, aging, and other life transitions, helping couples to adapt together over time.

Community Integration: Encourage the establishment of community support groups where couples can share experiences and learn from each other, fostering a supportive environment that promotes long-lasting marital relationships.

Implementation Strategy:

This model leverages the initial recommendations as a foundational framework to systematically address key marital issues through structured, scalable interventions. By developing and incorporating this model into existing marital support frameworks, it would significantly amplify the impact and practical applicability of the interventions, providing a robust solution to reducing divorce rates effectively.

6.4 Areas of Further Research

Given the complexity of marital relationships and the evolving societal norms and challenges, the current study has illuminated significant insights into the dynamics of marital stability and the factors contributing to divorce in Lusaka District, Zambia. However, as with any research endeavor, this study has its limitations and opens up avenues for further investigation. Expanding upon these areas can enrich our understanding and provide more nuanced guidance for interventions aimed at enhancing marital stability. Here are expanded suggestions for areas of future research:

6.4.1. Longitudinal Studies on Counseling Program Effectiveness

Future research should include longitudinal studies that follow couples over time to assess the long-term effectiveness of enhanced marriage counseling programs. These studies could examine the sustainability of improvements in marital satisfaction and stability, changes in communication patterns, and the resilience of couples to stressors over time. Longitudinal research can help identify which aspects of counseling yield lasting benefits and how these can be optimized for different populations.

6.4. Exploring Under-Researched Causes of Divorce

While this study has identified several key factors contributing to divorce, there remain under-explored areas that may significantly impact marital stability. Future research could delve into the psychological impacts of social media and virtual interactions on marital relationships, the effects of career prioritization over marital life, and the influence of societal expectations and norms on individual marriages. Investigating these areas could uncover new insights into the complex web of factors leading to marital breakdowns.

6.4.3. Comparative Studies across Different Contexts

Comparative studies across districts within Zambia or between different countries can provide valuable insights into the cultural, economic, and societal influences on marriage and divorce. Such research could explore how varying legal frameworks, social safety nets, and community

support systems impact marital stability. Additionally, comparing urban versus rural settings within the same country could shed light on how different lifestyles and community structures influence the quality and longevity of marital relationships.

6.4.4. The Role of Education and Economic Stability

Further research is needed to explore the role of education and economic stability in preventing divorce. This could include studies on how educational attainment and financial literacy impact marital satisfaction and resilience. Investigating the effectiveness of integrating financial planning and career counseling into marriage counseling programs could offer new strategies for strengthening marriages.

6.4.5. Impact of Childhood Experiences and Family Background

The influence of childhood experiences and family background on marital stability warrants deeper investigation. Future studies could examine how early life trauma, parental relationships, and family dynamics affect individuals' approaches to their own marriages. This research could inform more targeted counseling interventions that address deep-seated issues stemming from family history.

6.4.6. Technology and Privacy in Marriages

With the increasing ubiquity of technology in daily life, its impact on marriages is a critical area for further research. Studies could explore how the use of social media, online communication tools, and digital privacy concerns affect trust and intimacy in marriages. Understanding these dynamics could lead to the development of guidelines for couples on managing technology use in a way that supports marital health.

6.4.7. Integrating Mental Health Support into Marriage Counseling

The intersection of mental health and marital stability is an area needing more focused research. Investigating how mental health issues within one or both partner's impact marital dynamics and the effectiveness of integrating mental health support into marriage counseling could offer

important insights. This research could guide the development of holistic counseling approaches that address both marital and mental health challenges.

6.4.8. Cultural Practices and Marital Stability

The influence of cultural practices and traditions on marital stability is another area ripe for exploration. Research could examine how traditional practices related to marriage and family life support or undermine marital relationships in different cultural contexts. This could include studies on arranged marriages, dowry practices, and the role of extended family in marriage.

6.4.9. Gender Roles and Expectations

The evolving understanding of gender roles and expectations presents an important area for further research. Studies could explore how shifts in gender roles impact marital satisfaction and stability, the negotiation of household responsibilities, and power dynamics within marriages. Research in this area could inform counseling practices that promote equity and mutual respect in marital relationships.

6.4.10. Prevention and Early Intervention Strategies

Finally, there is a need for research focused on prevention and early intervention strategies for marital instability. This could include studies on the effectiveness of pre-marital counseling, early warning signs of marital distress, and the development of educational programs aimed at young adults to prepare them for healthy, stable relationships.

By addressing these areas of further research, scholars and practitioners can build upon the findings of the current study to develop more effective interventions and support systems for married couples. Expanding the knowledge base in these areas can contribute to the development of more resilient marriages and, by extension, stronger families and communities.

6.5. Limitation of the study

When assessing the findings and implications of a study on lifelong learning issues in marriage counseling, it's crucial to recognize the limitations that may affect the generalizability and application of the results. Here are the primary limitations of the current study:

1. **Sample Diversity and Size:** One significant limitation might be the diversity and size of the participant sample. If the study involved a limited number of participants or a homogeneous group in terms of cultural, socioeconomic, or geographical backgrounds, the findings might not be generalizable to other populations. Diverse cultural backgrounds can influence marital dynamics in distinct ways, and a sample not reflective of this diversity can skew the understanding of how universally applicable the counseling techniques might be.
2. **Self-Reporting Bias:** The reliance on self-reported data from participants can introduce bias. Participants may provide responses that they believe are socially acceptable or expected, or they might not fully remember or disclose critical details about their marital experiences. This can affect the accuracy of data concerning the impact of infidelity, financial management, or cultural influences on marital stability.
3. **Cross-Sectional Design:** If the study uses a cross-sectional design, it captures data at a single point in time rather than throughout the progression of counseling interventions. This limits the ability to draw conclusions about the effects of interventions over time and can't adequately capture the long-term impacts of marriage counseling on issues like trust rebuilding, financial management, or adjustment to cultural differences.
4. **Lack of Control Group:** Without a control group of couples who are not undergoing marriage counseling, it's challenging to determine whether improvements in marital satisfaction or stability are due to counseling interventions or other external factors. This makes it difficult to definitively attribute positive changes in marital dynamics directly to the counseling received.

5. **Counselor Variability:** The effectiveness of marriage counseling can significantly depend on the counselor's skills, approaches, and personal biases. Variability in counseling methods across different therapists can lead to inconsistent results, which might not be accounted for in the study. This variability can affect the study's findings regarding the effectiveness of specific interventions like financial education or conflict resolution techniques.
6. **Measurement Instruments:** The tools and instruments used to measure marital satisfaction, communication effectiveness, or trust levels might have limitations in terms of validity and reliability. If the instruments are not well-validated across different cultural contexts or marital situations, they might not accurately reflect the true dynamics in the relationships studied.
7. **Technology and Privacy Concerns:** The study may not fully address the rapidly evolving nature of technology, which can have unforeseen effects on marital dynamics. As technology progresses, new challenges in maintaining privacy and managing technology use in relationships emerge, which may not be adequately captured if the study's data collection precedes these technological advancements.

By acknowledging these limitations, researchers and counselors can better interpret the findings, consider the applicability of the recommendations, and design future studies that address these gaps. This approach ensures a more robust and applicable body of knowledge that can be effectively used to enhance marriage counseling practices and improve marital sustainability.

6.6 Final thoughts

The comprehensive examination of marital stability within Lusaka District, Zambia, brings to light the complex interplay of factors influencing the health and longevity of marriages. This study has not only identified key contributors to divorce but has also underscored the critical role of effective marriage counseling and the integration of lifelong learning principles in fostering stronger, more resilient marital relationships. The findings offer a hopeful outlook for the future of marital stability in the district, suggesting that through informed interventions, positive transformations in marriages are indeed achievable.

The implications of this research extend beyond the immediate realm of the couples involved, affecting the broader social fabric of the Lusaka District. Marriages form the cornerstone of stable and thriving communities. Therefore, enhancing marital stability can lead to a cascade of positive outcomes, including improved mental and emotional well-being among adults and children, reduced societal stress, and a stronger sense of community cohesion.

One of the study's key revelations is the necessity for marriage counseling programs to evolve and adapt to the changing dynamics of relationships. By incorporating lifelong learning concepts into counseling practices, couples can be equipped with the tools and knowledge needed to navigate the inevitable challenges and transitions of married life. This approach advocates for a paradigm shift in how marital support is conceptualized, moving from a problem-focused model to one that emphasizes growth, adaptation, and mutual understanding.

The promotion of lifelong learning in marriage highlights the importance of continuous personal and relational development. It suggests that marriages can thrive when couples engage in ongoing education about communication, financial management, conflict resolution, and emotional intelligence. Such education empowers couples to build a solid foundation for their relationship, one that can withstand the pressures and changes inherent in life.

Policymakers and community leaders play a pivotal role in fostering environments that support such transformative counseling practices. By implementing policies that encourage the integration of lifelong learning principles into marriage counseling and by providing resources for the development of comprehensive counseling programs, they can significantly contribute to the enhancement of marital stability in the district. Furthermore, community-based initiatives can complement formal counseling by offering support networks, workshops, and seminars that reinforce the values of lifelong learning and mutual growth within marriages.

In conclusion, the study's findings illuminate a path forward for improving marital stability in Lusaka District. It calls for a collaborative effort among counselors, policymakers, community leaders, and couples themselves to embrace and implement strategies that promote the health and longevity of marriages. Through informed counseling techniques and the adoption of policies that advocate for lifelong learning in marriage, there is a genuine opportunity for positive

transformation. Such efforts can lead to stronger marriages that not only benefit the couples involved but also contribute to the well-being and prosperity of the entire community. This vision of enhanced marital stability, grounded in the principles of continuous learning and adaptation, offers a beacon of hope for the future of families in Lusaka District and beyond

6.7. Chapter summary

Chapter 6 presents a strategic blueprint aimed at refining marriage counseling methodologies within Lusaka District. It underscores the imperative for an approach that is not only multifaceted and culturally attuned but also emphasizes the importance of adaptability and lifelong learning within the realm of marital support. Through a detailed examination of the challenges and dynamics affecting marital stability, this chapter illuminates the pivotal areas requiring targeted intervention and the integration of comprehensive, ongoing educational strategies into counseling practices.

This final chapter reflects on the complexities inherent in fostering marital resilience and stability, advocating for counseling frameworks that are responsive to the evolving needs and circumstances of couples. It stresses the significance of incorporating elements that facilitate continuous growth and learning, thereby equipping partners with the skills necessary to navigate the shifting landscapes of their relationships. By doing so, it posits that marriage counseling can transcend traditional boundaries, offering more than just conflict resolution or communication enhancement, and instead fostering deeper understanding, mutual respect, and shared growth over the lifespan of a marriage.

Looking forward, Chapter 6 offers an optimistic vision for the future of marital counseling in Lusaka District. It imagines a scenario where the implementation of improved counseling practices, grounded in the principles of lifelong learning and cultural sensitivity, contributes to the cultivation of stronger, more adaptive marital unions. Such advancements in counseling are seen as pivotal to not only enhancing the individual and collective well-being of couples but also to reinforcing the social fabric of the community at large.

In essence, this chapter serves as a call to action for counselors, policymakers, and community leaders alike, urging them to embrace and advocate for innovative approaches to marriage

counseling. By doing so, it asserts that the district can look forward to a future characterized by healthier, more resilient marital relationships, which in turn, foster a more vibrant and cohesive community. Through dedicated efforts to implement the recommendations outlined, there is a tangible opportunity for positive transformation, ensuring that marriages within Lusaka District can thrive in an ever-changing world.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Guide for Persons Who Experienced Divorce

Interview Guide for Divorcees: Lived Experiences and Lifelong Learning in Marriage Counseling

Letter of Invitation & Informed Consent for Research Interview

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a Research Interview conducted by Stabile Namwai Ngambi as part of the Doctorate of Philosophy in Adult Education degree through the University of Zambia. This study focuses on the Lived experiences of divorced persons, specifically addressing lifelong learning issues that marriage counseling must prioritize in the Lusaka urban district.

The purpose of the study is to establish the lived experiences of divorced individuals in the context of marriage counseling, with a particular emphasis on lifelong learning issues.

Objectives of the Study:

Objective 1: Identify the root causes of divorce within marital relationships.

1. Can you explain what you understand by the term "divorce" based on your personal experience?

Recording:

.....

Time:

Location:.....

2. Drawing from your personal experience, what factors or events do you believe caused your divorce?

Recording:

.....

Time:

Location:.....

Probing questions

2.Reflecting on the period leading up to your divorce, were there any specific challenges or difficulties in your marital relationship that you think contributed to the decision to divorce?

Recording:

.....

Time:

Location:.....

Were there any external factors, such as financial stress or societal pressures, that you believe played a role in the breakdown of your marriage?

Recording:

.....

Time:

Location:.....

4.How did communication breakdown or conflicts within your marriage contribute to the decision to pursue a divorce?

Recording:

.....

Time:

Location:.....

5. In hindsight, do you think there were early warning signs or red flags that, if addressed, could have prevented the eventual divorce?

Recording:

.....

Time:

Location:.....

6. Were there attempts at seeking professional help, such as marriage counseling, and how effective were these interventions in addressing the root causes of your marital issues?

Recording:

.....

Time:

Location:.....

7. How did changes in personal or professional circumstances impact your marital relationship, and do you see these changes as contributing factors to the divorce?

Recording:

.....

Time:

Location:.....

8. Did differences in values, beliefs, or life goals between you and your partner emerge as significant contributors to the breakdown of the marriage?

Recording:
.....

Time:

Location:.....

9. Reflecting on your divorce, do you believe that personal growth or changes in individual perspectives played a role in the decision to end the marriage?

Recording:
.....

Time:

Location:.....

Objective 2: Examine the existing content of current marriage counseling programs.

1.. From your perspective, what are the main topics or teachings typically covered in marriage counseling?

Recording:
.....

Time:

Location:.....

2. Reflecting on your lived experience, what differences and similarities did you observe between the teachings of marriage counseling and the actual experiences within your marriage?

Recording:

.....

Time:

Location:.....

probing questions

3. How did the marriage counseling sessions address the practical aspects of married life, such as communication skills, conflict resolution, and decision-making?

Recording:

.....

Time:

Location:.....

4. In your opinion, were the teachings of marriage counseling tailored to address the specific challenges faced by married couples in the Lusaka urban district?

Recording:

.....

Time:

Location:.....

5. Reflecting on your experiences, did the marriage counseling programs adequately prepare couples for the lifelong learning aspects of maintaining a healthy marriage?

Recording:
.....

Time:

Location:.....

6. Were there aspects of your marital journey that you felt were not adequately addressed or emphasized in the marriage counseling programs you attended?

Recording:
.....

Time:

Location:.....

7. How did the structure of the marriage counseling sessions contribute to or hinder your engagement with the content?

Recording:
.....

Time:

Location:.....

8. Were there specific counseling techniques or approaches that you found particularly helpful or, conversely, ineffective in addressing the challenges within your marriage?

Recording:

.....

Time:

Location:.....

9. In your opinion, how could marriage counseling programs be improved to better meet the diverse needs of couples, considering the unique dynamics within the Lusaka urban district?

Recording:

.....

Time:

Location:.....

These additional questions aim to delve deeper into participants' perspectives on the effectiveness and relevance of marriage counseling programs, providing insights into potential areas for improvement.

Objective 3: Explore and delineate the lifelong learning issues that warrant emphasis in marriage counseling to bolster the sustainability of marriages.

1. In your opinion, what lifelong issues should marriage counseling focus on to contribute to the sustainability of marriages?

Recording:

.....

Time:

Location:.....

2. Considering your experiences, what actions or behaviors do you think couples should avoid as they prepare for marriage to prevent divorce?

Recording:
.....

Time:

Location:.....

3. Reflecting on your divorce, what recommendations do you have for couples to sustain their marriage?

Recording:
.....

Time:

Location:.....

4. How do you feel about the experience of your divorce, and how has it impacted you?

Recording:
.....

Time:

Location:.....

5. From your perspective, what are the potential benefits that may arise from going through a divorce?

Recording:
.....

Time:

Location:.....

8. Conversely, what are the potential disadvantages associated with divorce, based on your experience?

Recording:

.....

Time:

Location:.....

6 Looking back, do you think there were actions or decisions that could have helped you avoid divorce?

Recording:

.....

Time:

Location:.....

7. Could you please elaborate on your response to the previous question?

Recording:

.....

Time:

Location:.....

Additional Questions for Objective 3: Explore Lifelong Learning Issues in Marriage Counseling

In your view, how well did the marriage counseling programs you attended address the evolving dynamics and challenges that couples may encounter throughout the different stages of their marriage?

Recording:
.....

Time:

Location:.....

Reflecting on your experiences, what role did effective communication play in the success or challenges within your marriage, and do you believe it was adequately emphasized in marriage counseling?

Recording:
.....

Time:

Location:.....

Were there specific skills or knowledge areas related to lifelong learning, such as conflict resolution, financial literacy, or emotional intelligence, that you wish had been more extensively covered in marriage counseling?

Recording:
.....

Time:

Location:.....

From your perspective, how did the cultural context of the Lusaka urban district influence the dynamics of your marriage, and should marriage counseling programs be more culturally tailored to address these nuances?

Recording:

.....

Time:

Location:.....

Considering the potential impact of external stressors on marriages, such as financial pressures or societal expectations, how can marriage counseling better equip couples to navigate these challenges?

Recording:

.....

Time:

Location:.....

Your participation in this interview is entirely voluntary, and all information provided will be kept confidential. If you agree to participate, please sign the attached consent form. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you for considering participation in this important study.

Sincerely,

Stabile Namwai Ngambi

Appendix B: Certificate of Informed Consent

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA



Certificate of Informed Consent

Title of Study: Experiences of Divorced Persons in Lifelong Learning and Counseling Issues in Lusaka District, Zambia

Researcher: Stabile Namwai Ngambi

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy in Adult Education

Participant Acknowledgment:

I,, hereby acknowledge that I have read and understood the information provided to me about the above study. I have been informed about the purpose of the research, the procedures to be undertaken, the potential risks and benefits, and the confidentiality measures in place. I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any repercussions.

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study and that these questions have been answered satisfactorily.

For Literate Participants:

Participant's Signature.....

Date:

Contact Information:

For any questions or concerns about the study, please contact:

Principal Investigator: *Stabile Namwai Ngambi*

Contact

Stabile Namwai Ngambi

The University of Zambia

P.O. Box 32379 LUSAKA Tel: +260-211-290 258/291 777 Fax: (+260)-211-290

Appendix C: Research Budget

Table 6: RESEARCH BUDGET, source (Author 1

| ITEM | QUANTITY | UNIT PRICE (ZMK) | TOTAL ITEM PRICE (ZMK) |
|------------------|--------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Reams of paper | 3 | 90 | 180 |
| Ball pens | 1 boxes | 20 | 20 |
| Pencils | 1 packets | 10 | 10 |
| Stapler | 1 stapler | 50 | 50 |
| Note pad | 5 note pads | 10 | 50 |
| Ruler | 2 rules | 7 | 14 |
| Flash disk | 1 flash disk | 100 | 100 |
| Correcting fluid | 2 bottles | 10 | 10 |
| Envelope | 1 box | 30 | 30 |

| | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------|--------|--------|
| Calculator | 1 calculator | 70 | 70 |
| Subtotal | | | 484 |
| SERVICE COSTS | | | |
| Typing | 125 pages | 5 | 625 |
| Printing | 125 pages x 4 | 375 | 1500 |
| Editing | 125 pages | 3 | 375 |
| Binding | 4 copies | 150 | 600 |
| Sub-total | | | 3 100 |
| TRANSPORT COSTS | | | |
| Going to round places | | 8, 000 | 8, 000 |
| Sub-total | | | 11,100 |
| Contingency | | 5% | 2,500 |
| Grand total | | | 14,600 |

Appendix D: Comprehensive timeline

Table 6. 1 Comprehensive timeline table for the outlined research activities from October 2021 to April 2024

| ACTIVITY | OCT- DEC 2021 | JAN- MAY 2022 | JUL- DEC 2022 | JAN- JUN 2023 | JUL- DEC 2023 | JAN- FEB 2024 | MAR- APR 2024 | APR 2024 |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| Development of Research Proposal | ✓ | | | | | | | |
| Ethical Clearance | ✓ | | | | | | | |
| Data Collection | | ✓ | | | | | | |
| Data Cleaning and Preparation | | | ✓ | | | | | |
| Data Analysis | | | | ✓ | | | | |
| Data Presentation | | | | | ✓ | | | |
| Report Writing | | | | | ✓ | | | |
| Submission of First Draft and Presentation(Defense) | | | | | | ✓ | | |
| Revisions Based on Feedback | | | | | | | ✓ | |
| Final Report | | | | | | | ✓ | |
| Publication | | | | | | | | ✓ |

Figure 6. 1 Schedule

Key: ✓ - Indicates the month(s) in which the activity is actively being worked on.

This table provides a detailed timeline for each stage of the research project, from the initial development of the research proposal to the final dissemination and publications. The timeline spans from October 2021 to April 2024, covering all the critical phases of the research process.

Appendix E: International Journal Popular Literature on Post-Divorce Traumatic Experiences

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Popular Literature on Post-Divorce Traumatic Experiences

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^{1, 2, 3}University of Zambia

ABSTRACT: This study explored popular literature on post-divorced traumatic experiences. The study employed a qualitative approach where literature from different studies was analysed thematically. The findings of this desk study revealed that divorced persons experienced feelings of anger and sadness, psychological effects, loss of identity and self-esteem, loss of psychological support, physical and mental health, as well as disturbance in family function and parenting. The study also established that divorced persons resorted to substance abuse, had experienced financial survival issues and experienced gender differences in the institutionalization of mental health issues. The study concluded that divorce has adverse effects on the lives of those experiencing it. It, therefore, recommended that pre-marriage counselling should be taken seriously before the marriage is pronounced.

KEYWORDS: Divorce, divorced person, lived experiences

INTRODUCTION

Divorce is proving itself as an inevitable family transition of many lives in the world. According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2019:851), "divorce is defined as a final legal dissolution of a marriage, that is, the separation of husband and wife which confers on the parties the right to remarriage under civil, religious and/or other provisions, according to the laws of each country". Amato (2000) asserts that the most dramatic change in family life during the 20th Century in the world was the sharp increase in the rate of divorce resulting into about 40 percent of children in the world faced with likelihood of experiencing effects of divorce before their adulthood. Research undertaken by most scholars has tended to focus on the causes and effects of divorce (Amato, 2000). However, little is discussed on traumatic experiences that divorced persons go through. It is against this knowledge gap that this paper explored the literature on post-divorce traumatic experiences in order to gain some insights into the phenomenon. The study sought to bring to surface experiences of those divorced, how they are coping and ultimately propose some coping strategies.

The Concept of Divorce

While a variety of definitions of the term divorce have been suggested, this paper will use the definition suggested by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2019:851) which defines divorce as "a final legal dissolution of a marriage, that is, the separation of husband and wife which confers on the parties the right to remarriage under civil, religious and/or other provisions, according to the laws of each country".

Theoretical Perspectives

Several theories have been suggested to explain the effect of divorce on adults and children. According to Nilsen (2020), these range from attachment theory, feminist theory and the more modern perspectives such as the parental loss perspective, the economic deprivation perspective, parental adjustment, the interparental conflict perspective and the divorce-stress-adjustment perspective. In this study, the economic deprivation perspective and the divorce-stress-adjustment perspective were used. While the economic deprivation posits that divorce driven by economic decline may affect children through less parental investment and increased parental stress, the divorce-stress-adjustment theory assumes that divorce is a stressful life change that both parents and children are impacted by (Nilsen, 2020). The two theoretical perspectives were selected because we wanted to explore both the psychological and economic experiences of divorcees.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study draws on and makes conclusions from the findings of other studies conducted about divorce. The literature search strategy for this paper involved searching electronic academic databases. To provide additional relevant literature, snowballing was used that involved searching through the reference lists of the literature identified through electronic database searches. Studies were included in the analysis of this paper if they dealt with the issue of divorce. The exclusion criteria involved

Popular Literature on Post-Divorce Traumatic Experiences

the elimination of studies that were not written in English. Since this study took a qualitative approach, data were presented in themes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results and discussion of the study under the following themes: feelings of anger and sadness, psychological effects, substance abuse, parenting, disturbance in family function, financial survival, physical and mental health, gender differences in the institutionalization of mental health issues, loss of identity and self-esteem and loss of psychological support. These themes are discussed in detail in the sections that follow.

Feelings of anger and sadness

According to Gaffal (2010), feelings of anger, betrayal and sadness were the experiences of the participants in the study conducted. For instance, one of the participants from Gaffal's study whose wife was having an extra-marital affair shared his experience in the following words:

"I experienced anger because she betrayed me and what she did destroyed my dignity ...My trust for women was damaged. I always thought I could trust women. I met her at church but after my ex-wife did that, I could not trust any woman. I was confused and sad."

Feelings of sadness were experienced by John and Sam for the fact that their marriages ended in divorce. John, who indicated incompatibility as the main reason for his divorce, stated the following, "I am sad that marriage has come to an end and that am divorced". Sam, on the other hand, speaking from a Christian point of view confessed that "divorce is the last option in the bible, ... I thought it was a disgusting thing, I was sad that we did not live up to the promise we made before God. The feeling of sadness was also shared by Dan and Jeffrey who admitted being sad and stated that their sadness came from parting with their children (Cohen and Finzi-dottan, 2015).

Psychological effects

A review of studies revealed that divorced people experience mental health challenges that affect them psychologically. Mbedzi (2018 citing Preller, 2013) explains that strong emotions like pain, stress and depression characterise the life of a divorced person. This might result in the affected persons experiencing an increase in social isolation, economic problems and a concomitant lower standard of living, difficulties in raising children, risk of health problems, and psychological distress among others. The following extract from Mason et al. (2012) study illustrates this:

"I think loneliness was the biggest thing. Because now you always have someone next to you by your side and it's like there is no one there" (Mark). Sam, on the other hand, said that "You feel like you are lonely and that the significant part of you has been ripped off. Your family is gone, you are all by yourself. After divorce, I had nothing to look forward to. My whole life just came to a stand-still."

It can be noted from the above sentiments that the divorce process itself prompted loneliness in some people. Because couples are used to being together, divorce creates a situation where the two must live apart; a situation that fuels loneliness in people. This is consistent with Mooney et al. (2011) quoted in Mbezi (2018) who argues that divorced persons also experienced lower levels of psychological well-being, such as depression, anxiety, a poorer self-concept and self-esteem.

There are also feelings of fear that emanate from divorce. This might be attributed to the fact that the other person might no longer be available to take care of and provide for their children. Added to this is the feeling of failure that normally accompanies divorce. Affected individuals, especially men, might consider themselves failures because they perceive themselves as having failed to save their marriage from breaking as a result.

The lived experience of the divorced are also well elaborated by Galatzer-Levy and Kraus (1999) who explain that a divorced person experiences social and psychological changes in individual and in family relationships that can extend over many years. They assert that the loss which is a critical component of divorce tends to be analogous to bereavement but, together with grief, there are other powerful effects like rage, sexual jealousy, and unrequited love.

Galatzer-Levy and Kraus (1999) further stress that there are clear and distinct patterns of social and psychological problems for men and women after divorce. They state that women are overcome by a sense of guilt, self-blame and sadness caused by the ending of a relationship. For men, on the other hand, they indicate that it is not so culturally acceptable to express their distress and, therefore, emotional problems are frequently obscured, leading to somatization of stress. They explain that health problems that develop are often aggravated by drinking, smoking, and over-working in the aftermath of divorce.

Additionally, Emery (1994) asserts that a divorced family is still a family, even though the spouses are no longer sharing the same residence but still sharing relationships. Ahrons (1995) asserts that divorce remains a crisis of the family transition. Unlike other

Popular Literature on Post-Divorce Traumatic Experiences

crises, the crisis of divorce does not occur suddenly but is preceded by a period in which marital conflict escalates and marital satisfaction decreases. This process starts long before marital separation takes place.

Hagestad and Smyer (1982) describe divorce as a multi-faceted process of multiple social and psychological ceasing and concluded that the longer the marital relationship, the greater the number of bonds that need to be severed. They described the divorce process as an orderly or disorderly process depending on whether the social and psychological bonds of marriage are dissolved before the legal separation takes place

Substance abuse

The results showed that people experiencing divorce, especially women, might be prone to alcohol and drug abuse and tend to find solace in liquor. For instance, one participant had this to say:

Alcohol was my escape gate it was my coping mechanism, it was my friend, and I could forget. I was in my second marriage. I wanted it to work and yet I could not leave with this man, he lied to me, he was a con artist. He went as far as putting a gun on my head, I thought I was going to be dead. On another episode, he pushed me into my cupboard and set my clothes alight and closed the doors.

As Pieterse (2002) observes, these women normally tend to have trust issues and fail to be emotionally sound. Even though some of them move on, the trauma of life after marriage is never forgotten. A distinction is made between women who are widowed compared to those who are divorced. A divorced woman tends to harbour resentment, feel unloved and unwanted, especially if she is not economically independent. On the other hand, a woman who is widowed tends to integrate well and fully fast. The process of community divorce tends to take long. On the other hand, divorced economically independent women tend to be drug addicts and alcohol abusers as they claim to find solace and comfort in these substances.

Parenting

Mnyango's (2018) study states that divorce experience affected men in many areas. The study found that the greatest challenge experienced by those divorced was the ability to take care of the children who were living apart from them. Fathers mostly had challenges visiting their children owing to factors such as distance to and from the children's place of residence. Visits had to be arranged beforehand and then supervised, and sometimes the mother cancelled arrangements to visit the children. These are the issues that men go through post-marriage times. One of the affected participants in Mnyango's (2018) study shared his experience in as follows:

"I visit them every alternative weekend; Saturday and Sunday, that means I have to travel from Durban to Pretoria to go and see them. But it is not working because of the difficulty of living in Durban, the cost involved going to see them, it was agreed that she will be paying for every alternative trip I made to see the kids. She is not doing that; she is not paying for any single trip. It is made in the court order. Despite making earlier arrangements, most of my visits are cancelled. My contact rights to my children have been denied"

Research by Reginald Phumlani Alpaslan (2018) shows that men lost custody of children after divorce. This is because the courts are perceived to rule in favour of the women when it comes to issues of children's custody. One of the participants lamented the loss of the relationship with his children and lamented that the judicial system was unfair in judgment because it focused on gender instead of parenting skills that the couple possesses. He explained that the fact that one is female does not guarantee that one is good at parenting. The study has shown that men have psychological challenges due to missing their children. For example, they miss cooking, helping their children with homework and even just having fellowship with them. It has demonstrated that men who have access to the children are less stressed compared to those with limited or even zero access to them (Reginald Phumlani Alpaslan, 2018).

Johnston and Campbell (1988) further explain that after divorce, there is an experience of what is referred to as "mother competitor" who actively participates in the battle for custody and in their father's brainwashing campaign which is negative on the divorced spouses as well the children. This war is where the mother talks ill of the father to the children and vice-versa. This damages children's perception of their parents and the marriage union at large. For adults, divorce can have many meanings, the escape from unhappy abuse, a tragic disappointment, or a fresh start with new possibilities. Absorbed in the emotional, legal, and financial issues of divorce, those with children may not even realize what impact this transition means to their children. One study points to the fact that it is not divorce that has an impact negatively on the life of the children but how their parents deal with the co-parenting issue. This process can have a substantial and enduring effect on the adjustment of the children (McDonald, et al., 2000). Furthermore, literature indicates that many divorced individuals experience negative feelings towards their ex-spouses long after the divorce has been finalized (Traina, 2004:32). The co-parenting process, however, demands that both parents need to be there for their children.

Disturbance in family function

Divorce, although permitted in traditional Islam society, has been a rare and socially unacceptable occurrence until relatively recently. A divorce is often a traumatic event for people of any culture but for Guff Arabs where there are strong ties to a family

Popular Literature on Post-Divorce Traumatic Experiences

and tradition, it can be a politically disturbing and stigmatizing life event, especially for women, whose status in society centres around spousal and maternal roles (Al Gharaihen and Bromfield, 2012). Family is central to people and a breakdown of an interfamily marriage often between couples has negative consequences across an entire extended family network.

Arising from divorce, most spouses must cope with a new life and adjust to a new lifestyle. Thus, the preceding assertion disturbs the family and divorced individuals must adjust to this new phenomenon. There are various theoretical perspectives on the family which have different and often contradictory implications for how the family will be approached. While every social scientist or researcher is free to subscribe to the perspective of his or her choice, Viljoen (1996) advises that this should only be done while familiar with alternative approaches.

It also needs to be recognized that the choice of anyone's perspective begins to colour the world view of the researcher. According to Muncie et al. (1995) and Carrington (2002), there are several functions of the family and if the family is disturbed, what was envisaged as a goal in a family is disrupted. Suggestions that family is a crucial institution in modern society are not new. From the functionalist perspective, society is upheld by social institutions, each of which has well-defined functions to perform. Based on Parson's structural functionalism, two core functions are assigned to the family, namely primary socialization of children and the stabilizing of the adult personality which, in turn, would lead to a stable, healthy society. Thus, divorce has a huge impact on the family and ultimately disturbs the family.

Financial Survival

This dimension of divorce looks at the divisions of assets of the marriage, as well as post-divorce maintenance, which can often cause as much or even more conflict than custody issues. Economic divorce also considers the legal costs of litigation. King quoted by Van Zyl (1997:8) refers to this legal process (litigation) as an expensive ritual and further claims that the costly litigation of courts is beyond the reach of an average citizen. This was well illustrated in a study by Pieterse (2002) who observes that one of the participants referred to the costs as "frightening" and another, together with his ex-wife had spent almost three times the value of their joint estate on legal costs before they opted for mediation. Thus, it can be contended that through an economic divorce, the parties to the marriage are left with almost amputated economic footing and find it difficult to cope with the pressure that comes with single parenthood and single living.

Due to the generally low economic and education levels of women, divorce makes them experience diverse financial challenges. Those who remain with the children have failed to educate them. Others have ended up in prostitution while the children end up in the street and become scavengers, sellers of good and street kids.

Physical and Mental Health

A study by Henig (2013) revealed some of the lived experiences of the divorced person. Henig argues that compared to adults in stable marriages, divorced couples on average, experience both poor physical and mental health and that they also experience more social isolation and loneliness. Some divorced persons go on to enter new romantic relationships that are believed to help divorced persons rebuild self-esteem and happiness. For others, new love relationships produce greater feelings of loneliness, unhappiness, and lower self-esteem. Henig's study discovered that several divorced persons continue to depend on their previous spouses for emotional support and practical matters and this results in them struggling to adjust to the divorce status.

Wallerstein (1986) in Henig (2013) states that the most surprising findings in their 10-year follow up on divorced families was that in most families, divorce resulted in an enhanced quality of life for only one of the partners, often, the wife. Wallerstein indicates that notwithstanding the passage of a decade, only 16% of divorced men had improved psychologically, 12% had deteriorated, and 17% remained unchanged. Wallerstein states that this may be partially explained by the fact only 35% of the men had sought to dissolve their marriages, and the remaining 65% of divorced men had opposed their wives' initiation of the divorce. Wallerstein further states that men and women, who had initially desired the divorce, were more likely to have enhanced the quality of their lives than those who had opposed it".

Gender differences in the institutionalisation of mental health issues

Literature has been revealed that there is a high institutionalisation rate of men compared to women in mental health facilities. Findings show that there is a higher admission ratio of divorced men to married men, as well as a higher admission ratio of 17 of divorced women to married women. Further, it was found that even though divorced and separated women attempt suicide more often than divorced and separated men, the deaths from suicides among men were discovered to be higher. It is noteworthy that separated and divorced men have higher mortality rates than separated and divorced women from many causes not limited to homicide, which includes motor vehicle accidents, and cirrhosis of the liver (Bloom et al., 1979; Verbrugge, 2004 in Henig, 2013). A study discovered that men were better adjusted than women in the three years after the divorce. They were also better off financially, had more stable and satisfying jobs, and had experienced less psychological stress and more psychological satisfaction in the previous months (Clarke-Stewart and Bailey, 1989 in Henig, 2013).

Henig (2013) argues that women tend to initiate separation and divorce more frequently than men, this shows that men are "more out of touch" on emotional and relational matters than women. Irrespective of gender, "leavers" initially fare better in terms of emotional wellbeing than those who have been "left" and who frequently feel rejected (Bickerdike 2000 cited in Smyth, 2004).

Popular Literature on Post-Divorce Traumatic Experiences

Jordan 1988 (cited in Smyth, 2004) found that men appeared to be generally “unaware or unprepared for separation” and often “shut down” feelings about the relationship soon after its end. As a result, they frequently carry unresolved feelings of grief and hurt for several years after the initial marital separation. These feelings may impact men’s physical and mental health.

Loss of identity and self-esteem

A study by Boon’s (2005) disclosed that the source of grief in divorce is that the other person is still physically within reach, although metaphysically removed from one’s life. The study further showed that midlife women seem to be negatively affected by divorce processes. Despite the influence of the feminist movement, the ‘marriage and motherhood mandate’ remains prominent and very powerful and divorce may represent a significant failure in the important roles of wife and mother. Linked to this is the loss of social identity, status, and self-image for divorced women whose social standing and identity are still likely to be strongly connected to that of their husbands. Loss of self-image is embedded in the perception that one is inadequate or unacceptable, and thus rejected in marriage, the most intimate of relationships (Kitson and Holmes, 1992 in Boon, 2005).

Every divorced woman has the task of redefining oneself to gain a new self-identity and image. The loss of social support from family, friends and church following a divorce is often not easy to deal with. A divorced woman loses her spouse and experience diminished support from the in-law network. The mutual friends of the couple may also be lost forever. The loss of a spouse through a divorce is very disruptive for women who do not have other people with whom they confide. This lack of support may tend to continue for the rest of their lives. As researchers, we believe that women seem to lose out since they usually focus so much on their marriages. In the African setting and, especially the Zambian setting, most women consider marriage as their full-time career and others even abandon their careers to be full-time wives to take care of their spouses and children, a situation which makes them more vulnerable should their marriages end in divorce.

Loss of Psychological Support

Psychological divorce is defined as the “separation of self from the personality and influence of the ex-spouse. Research has shown that men experience a lack of psychological support compared to women. Mnyango and Alpaslan’s (2018) study discovered that men found it very difficult or even unacceptable, to articulate deepest feelings, worries, fears, insecurities, emotional pain, and grief associated with divorce. This may be because numerous societies still uphold the traditional constructs of masculinity, to the detriment of men’s mental health, which dictates to men that they should support and protect the family as part of their marital role. As a result, it is quite difficult for men to show their emotional side in public.

Research has also showed that married men have few confidants and that men confidants are usually their wives. Therefore, once the marriage is ended, they lose their confidants. Furthermore, the primary source of emotional support for men is their wife and children and once that marriage relationship is ended this ends too. According to Evans (2015), women could have a wider circle of confidantes to whom they can turn. Women have mothers, sisters, pastors, and counsellors they can confide in. Women have a greater propensity to forget close relationships with their friends, who would provide solace and to whom they would go to seek post-divorce counsel.

CONCLUSION

This paper set out to explore the lived experiences of divorced persons. The paper has argued that divorce is a life experience that is accompanied by psychological effects such as feelings of anger, betrayal, sadness and confusion and might lead to mental health challenges like depression. The paper has also shown that divorce might lead to substance abuse, disrupt family bonds, is financially straining and has a toll on the parenting of children. In addition, evidence from this study seems to suggest that there are gender differences in terms of the effect of divorce on the mental wellbeing of men and women. The important implication of these findings is that pre-marriage counselling should be taken seriously as an essential prerequisite to marriage.

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Appendix F: Journal: Causes Of Divorce Based On Lived Experience of Divorced PERSONS IN LUSAKA, ZAMBIA.



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

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ABSTRACT

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

Keywords: Divorce, divorced persons, Lived Experiences

INTRODUCTION

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

The Concept of Divorce

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

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

IRRETRIEVABLE BREAKDOWN THEORY OF MARRIAGE

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

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

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

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

Statement of the Problem

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

Objective of the Study

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

Methodology

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

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Infidelity

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

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

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

One married women respondent stated:

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Another male respondent narrated:

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

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

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

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

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



Below are some exact explanation given by male respondents:

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

The other respondent explained:

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

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

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

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

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

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

LACK OF MARITAL AFFECTION

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

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

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

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

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL ABUSE

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

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

One female respondent explained:

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

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

In the same vein, a male respondent stated:

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

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

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

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

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

SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND ADDICTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

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

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

One male respondent had this to say:

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

This respondent continued the narration:

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

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

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

One male respondent who had lost his job stated:

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

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

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

POOR COMMUNICATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LACK OF CONFIDENTIALITY

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

A male respondent stated:

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

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

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

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

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

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

LACK OF RESPECT/ UN-SUBMISSIVENESS

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

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

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

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

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

FAMILY AND FRIENDS INTERFERENCE

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

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

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

Another male respondent explained:

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

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

One male stated:

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

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

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

CONFLICT IN RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

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

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

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

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

WOMEN'S EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

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

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

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

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

UNFORGIVENESS

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

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

SEXUAL CHALLENGES

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

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

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

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

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

CHILD BEARING

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

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

One male respondent stated:

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

NOT KNOWING CHORES

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

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

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

Accusation

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

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

Inadequate Dating

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

USE OF CHARMS

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

One male respondent stated:

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

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

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

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

SOCIAL MEDIA

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

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

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

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

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

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

CONCLUSION

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

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