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An Evaluation on Traditional Marriage Counsellors' Perception on the Causes of Divorce in Kalonga and Luangwa Wards of Kabwe Urban District, Zambia

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Abstract

This paper aimed at evaluating the Traditional Marriage Counsellors' perceptions on the causes of divorce in selected areas of Kabwe urban district, namely: Kalonga and Luangwa Wards. A descriptive research design was used where 52 participants who had worked as traditional marriage counsellors for a period of 5 years in Kalonga and Luangwa wards in Kabwe were derived using the Taro Yamane's formula. However, only 20 candidates met the criteria after the employment of a combination of Purposive (judgmental) and Chain-referral (snowballing) sampling techniques in the selection of participants and saturation of data from the respondents. Data was collected using Semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The study established that the marriage curriculum given by Traditional Marriage Counsellors addressed the major needs and possible challenges of marriage life. It also found that it is not every married person that qualifies to be a Traditional Marriage Counsellors. Therefore, the elders of those intending to marry must do a thorough consultation on the Traditional Marriage Counsellors if there would be a proper formation. Also, contrary to notions that traditional teachings are parochial, Traditional Marriage Counsellors while holding on to human knowledge that is almost as old as when humans begun to live in societies, are refreshing their experiences and knowledge through practice and joining association as a way to respond to modern challenges of life. The study recommended that government through the Ministry of Education consider to incorporate indigenous culture into the curriculum.

Keywords: Traditional Marriage Counsellors, Divorce, Counselling, Curriculum

1. Introduction

Globalization has triggered some dynamics at economic, political, educational, social and family levels. Researchers, observing family dynamics, have seen an increasing number of divorces. According to (Ng'ambi, Ndhlovu, & Sichula, Causes of Divorce based on lived experience of divorced persons in Lusaka, Zambia, 2023) [35], the abrupt change in family life during the 20th Century is a consequent of the sharp increase in the rate of divorce and this has resulted into about 40 percent of children in the world facing likelihood of experiencing the negative effects of divorce before their adulthood.

According to the United States' National Centre for Health Statistics, there are approximately 4 to 5 million people who get married in United States of America every year and almost 42 to 53% of those marriages ultimately end in divorce (World Population Review, 2024) [45]. Expressed in a figure, that is approximately 2.7 million divorces. Recent data on the European Union (EU) member States showed that about 1.9 million marriages and an estimated 0.6 million divorces took place in the EU in 2022. These numbers can be expressed as 4.2 marriages for every 1 000 persons and 1.6 divorces for every 1 000 persons (Eurostat, 2024) [13]. In 2018, the mean duration of marriages ending in divorce in the UK was 12.4 years, rising from 8.9 years in 1985 (Advokatsmart, 2024) [2]. In China between 2016 and 2020, there were almost 4 million divorces recorded annually (Lu & Li, 2024) [25]. These numbers have prompted the Chinese government through the Civil Affairs University to introduce a new undergraduate marriage program "to develop-related industries and culture" (Reuters, 2024) [39] in view of promoting more marriages and population boom. The reasons for the increasing numbers of divorce are attributed to the big city environment and increasing economic independence of women (Sheykhi, 2020) [40].

In Sub-Sahara Africa, largely 20 percent of first marriages in 28 out of 34 countries end within 15 years. It is approximated

that the average period of a marriage at the time of the first dissolution is between 4.8 and 9.4 years. Women across all countries get remarried rapidly (John & Nitsche, 2022) [17]. More so, statistics reveals that 10% of African women are widows, and out of every six women, one is a divorcee. So, female headed household are growing all across the continent (Sheykhi, 2020) [40]. A recent report focusing on Arab nations in 2024 has revealed that Libya recorded the highest divorce rate in the Arab world with 2.5 divorces per 1000 people, followed by Egypt at 2.3 and Algeria stood at a rate of 1.6 (Harathy, 2024) [15]. According to a study by (Kazungu & Byaro, 2023) [20], in Tanzania two out of every 100 individuals of marriageable age are currently divorced. Moreover, data shows that Tanzania has a startlingly high divorce rate with over 300 divorces occurring each month in Dar es Salaam alone. The research established failure to consummate, conflicts, cruelty, adultery and desertion as the main causes of divorce. The data set used was based on the couples who had divorced in courts.

In Zambia, the last five years has seen an increase in divorce cases. For instance, in 2020 approximately 20,000 divorces were recorded, of which about 90% were customary or traditional marriages and about 10% were statutory or civil marriages. In 2021, 22, 000 divorces were recorded and nearly 31,000 marriages ended in divorce in 2022. In 2023, there was an increase by over 5,000 (Kunda, 2024) [24] making a total of 36,000 divorces. The Zambia Demographic and Health Survey Report of 2024 indicated that more women are divorced or separated (10% of the 6,127 interviewed female participants) than men (4% of the 4,906 interviewed male participants) (Zambia Statistics Agency, 2024) [50]. According to research by (Ng'ambi, Ndhlovu, & Sichula, Causes of Divorce based on lived experience of divorced persons in Lusaka, Zambia, 2023) [35], the causes of the increasing divorce cases are infidelity which gave birth to physical and psychological torture to the affected couples; lack of marital affection; physical and mental abuse, substance abuse and addiction and financial challenges. In another study, (Mulenga, Mapoma, Halubanza, Kaira, & Mwiiya, 2023) [32] found that spouses who had experienced GBV, being employed, having a phone and access to internet, owning property (house or land) alone increased the likability of divorce. The sources for establishing the causes of divorce mainly focused on the lived experiences of divorced or divorcing couples. So little has been explored from the viewpoint of men and women responsible for initiating candidates into the social institution of marriage. It is against this knowledge gap that this research paper will interview traditional marriage counsellors in order to obtain knowledge on the causes of divorce.

1.1 Research Problem

According to the 2010 Zambia Census report, Kabwe Urban had 54783 people who were either married or cohabiting and of these, 5215 were divorced (Namonje & Mandyata, Traditional marriage counselling in Zambia: Exploring the views of stakeholders in Kabwe Urban, Central Province, 2017) [34]. This translated implies that 1 out of every 10 married persons are experiencing the challenges of divorce. (Mulenga, Mapoma, Halubanza, Kaira, & Mwiiya, 2023) [32] indicate that urban and rural Kabwe have a divorce rate of 14.8 percent and 12.3 percent respectively. There are various reasons why people divorce among them include inadequate marriage counselling lessons for couples (Ng'ambi, Ndhlovu, & Sichula, Causes of Divorce based on lived experience of divorced persons in Lusaka, Zambia, 2023) [35]; unfaithfulness, lack of spousal support and conflicts. Nonetheless, the causes of divorce are largely perceived from lived in experiences of couples or divorced people but never from the viewpoint of Traditional Marriage Counsellors (here forth, TCMs) who are mainly responsible for preparing them for marriage and provide counsel during marriage. This study, therefore, sought to evaluate the causes of divorce in urban Kabwe from the perspective of traditional marriage counsellors. This study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To assess the roles of Traditional Marriage Counsellors in pre-and post-marital counselling.
2. To ascertain the curriculum offered by Traditional Marriage Counsellors to couples.
3. To examine the causes of divorce from the viewpoint of Traditional Marriage Counsellors.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the Culture and Religious Factors Theory. According to this theory, increasing cases of divorce are explained by assessing the effects of cultural norms and religious beliefs on marital stability. The study acknowledges that societal norms, religious teachings, legal frameworks, and social support systems differ across cultures and therefore influence divorce rates in different ways. There are cultures that prioritize lifelong commitment and discourage divorce, while there are cultures that are more lenient when it comes to divorce. Different religions also hold varying views on divorce. In accordance with cultural and religious values, legal systems may either facilitate or hinder divorce. The social support systems provided by cultural and religious communities can provide couples with resources, counselling and guidance (Mulenga, Mapoma, Halubanza, Kaira, & Mwiiya, 2023) [32]. We have adopted this theory because marriage in Africa, and particularly among Zambians, is both a cultural and religious phenomenon. Those preparing for marriage undergo rigorous tutelage by Traditional Marriage Counsellors (religious officials) who pass on the cultural and religious values, knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and skills to prepare them for the state of marriage. We intend to understand why the cultural and religious heritage handed over to those preparing for marriage is being overlooked.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The preparation of young people for entry into family life should be considered an integral part of the general system of education. Until recently, it has been taken for granted that once a young man and woman had reached a certain age, they were completely ready to start their own family. The findings of the study will be of assistance to concerned groups such as TMC, couples, professional counsellors, social scientists, NGOs and administrators to design policies and programmes that support and sustain marriages. Also, the results contribute to the literature of Afrocentric Counselling Skills and Techniques.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The study focused on men and women, married or widowed, who are Traditional Marriage Counsellors and had been in this practice for at least 5 years or more. Also, this paper

concentrated on Kabwe Urban and, in particular, Kalonga and Luangwa wards which has a population of 19,706 and 16,005 respectively (Zambia Statistical Agency, 2025) [49]. The participants were mainly drawn from this ward because it offers a rich, diverse cultural and social setting to explore the interplay between modernity and traditional worldviews especially in relation to matters of marriage. Additionally, the researcher's experience with and link to Kabwe, which comes from living in the said wards, makes it convenient to collaborate with the people and assist the scholar to know more about the local situation.

2. Methodology

The study used the descriptive research design. This design aims at systematically gathering information in order to describe a phenomenon, situation or population. The research essentially utilized this design because it assisted in regulating, reporting and assessing the attitudes and opinions of Traditional Marriage Counsellors on the causes of divorces in Kalonga and Luangwa wards in Kabwe district.

2.1 Sample Size and Sampling Methods

In this research, the target population was drawn from Kalonga and Luangwa wards in Kabwe district. Since the number of Traditional Marriage Counsellors in Kabwe is unknown, the study targeted 60 participants. This of TMC included couples, widows and widowers who had trained and counselled young couples for at least 5 or more years. The sample size was derived using the Yamane's formula in order to maintain 95% confidence interval (Banda, 2019) [6]. The calculation formula for sample size:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Whereas:

N = Target population (60)
n = Total sample size
e = Desired margin error (0.05)

$$n = \frac{60}{1+60(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{60}{1.15}$$

n = 52

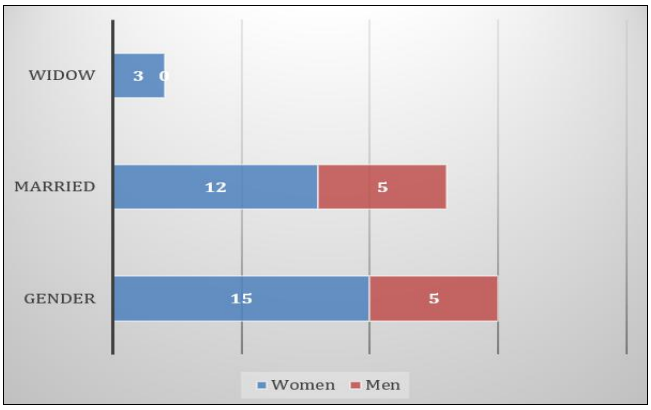
The sample size deduced was 52. Nonetheless, only 20 candidates met the criteria after the employment of a combination of purposive and chain-referral sampling techniques in the selection of participants and saturation of data from the respondents.

2.2 Data Collection and Analytical Tools

The study used semi-structured interviews (each lasting between 60-90 minutes) to collect data from participants. A combination of open and closed ended questions were asked to respondents and this allowed the researcher to collect the required data for the study. More so, a recorder was used to record the data during interviews and later transcribed. Thematic analysis was used to anatomise the data. The qualitative data that was derived from the interviews was analysed in a way that enabled the researcher to examine the sentences line-by-line. The words and phrases were closely scrutinised so that we could understand the underlying meanings and translate them into codes that will interpret the emerging thoughts (Banda, 2019) [6]. Transcripts of key informant interviews were transcribed into major themes derived from categorization of data. Basic descriptive statistics such as frequencies and tables were used in the analysis of quantitative data.

3. Findings

3.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents



Source: Field data, 2025

Fig 1: Gender and marriage status

Figure 1 presents the demographic characteristics of traditional marriage counsellors, particularly their gender and marital status, who participated in the research. According to this figure, seventeen (17) of the twenty (20) participants were married and three (3) were widows. Also, it shows that there were more female participants (15) compared to only five (5) male respondents.

Table 1: Demographic information of the respondents

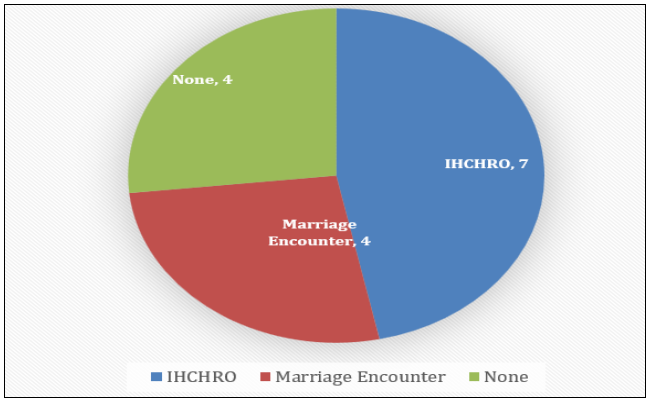
Code	Traditionally prepared for marriage	Duration of preparation	Duration of married	Duration as a TCMs
TCM 1	Yes	30 days	40 years	20 years
TCM 2	Yes	21 days	34 years	10 years
TCM 3	Yes	14 days	34 years	14 years
TCM 4	Yes	14 days	29 years	10 years
TCM 5	Yes	30 days	33 years	10 years
TCM 6	Yes	7 days	53 years	12 years
TCM 7	Yes	14 days	35 years	16 years
TCM 8	Yes	21 days	30 years	17 years
TCM 9	Yes	7 days	36 years	20 years
TCM 10	Yes	21 days	43 years	20 years
TCM 11	Yes	14 days	56 years	30 years
TCM 12	Yes	21 days	30 years	20 years
TCM 13	Yes	12 days	43 years	22 years
TCM 14	Yes	21 days	25 years	15 years
TCM 15	Yes	30 days	35 years	25 years
TCM 16	Yes	21 days	30 years	15 years
TCM 17	Yes	14 days	15 years	7 years
TCM 18	Yes	14 days	20 years	10 years
TCM 19	Yes	23 days	12 years	6 years
TCM 20	Yes	15 days	20 years	13 years

Source: Field data, 2025

Table 1 shows that all the 20 counsellors had been traditionally taught before entering the institution of

marriage. The duration for this training varied from person to person and gender with seven and thirty as the minimum and maximum respectively. The male participants, for instance, TCM 6 and TCM 9 were trained for 7 days; TCM 13 for 12 days; TCM 3, TCM 11, TCM 17 and TCM 18 confirmed that they were traditionally trained for 14 days. For female respondents, the table shows that TCM 4 and TCM 7 were trained for 14 days; only TCM 20 was trained for 15 days TCM 2, TCM 8, TCM 10, TCM 12, TCM 14 and TCM 16 were prepared for 21 days; TCM was drilled for 23 days and TCM 1, TCM 5 and TCM 15 were drilled for 30 days. One notices that the duration for preparing a woman for marriage was longer than that of a man. According to TCM 9, the reason why training for women is longer than that of a man is that *"marriage is centred on a woman. Most things are known by a woman hence being grilled for a longer period. A man is told what he will find in a marriage but a woman practices what a man will find in a marriage."* This possibly elucidates why there are few male traditional counsellors and more females because there are a lot of activities that are involved in the preparation of a woman.

Table 1 also shows that the period the respondents have been married ranged between 12 and 56 years. The respondents TCM 4, TCM 8 and TCM 20 identified as widows, confirmed that they had been married for 29, 30 and 20 years respectively before the demise of their husbands. In terms of how long they had practiced as a traditional marriage counsellor, there was variance in years ranging from 6 years up to 30 years as the most experienced. It is important to note that the traditional marriage counsellor with 30 years of counselling experience was at the time of conducting this research celebrating 56 years of marriage.



Source: Field data, 2025

Fig 2: Affiliation to a group/association

Figure 2 shows that 7 traditional marriage counsellors (TCM 1, TCM 2, TCM 3, TCM 7, TCM 8, TCM 14, TCM 15) are members of the Ituna Herbal Cultural and Research Organisation (IHCHRO). This organisation is committed to reviving, preserving and promoting cultural heritage, helping to strengthen community values and tradition. The respondents confirmed that they were certified and their membership is renewed every year. Also, the organisation provides continuous professional development to its members to enhance their skills and knowledge to be effective counsellors in their society. 4 respondents (TCM 11, TCM 9, TCM 5, TCM 4) said that they were not affiliated with any group though they acknowledged that informally they met with other fellow counsellors to refresh their knowledge and skills. The respondent TCM 9 expressed that he was considering being a member of an association and this is because *such affiliations are important as they are a means for refreshing one's knowledge through knowledge and skills exchange with fellow members of the association. It assists you to become a more effective counsellor.* Farther, 4 participants (TCM 6, TCM 10, TCM 12, TCM 13) were members of the Marriage Encounter. According to the Worldwide Marriage Encounter website, the organisation is dedicated to preparing, sustaining and continually assist couples to support and connect deeply (Marriage Encounter, n.d). Their teachings are rooted in Catholicism and traditional marriage values and norms. The respondents separately highlighted that they combined traditional and Roman Catholic Church teachings on marriage in the preparation of those intending to marry. They confirmed that they regularly met for refresher courses and also to grow their relationship with their spouses.

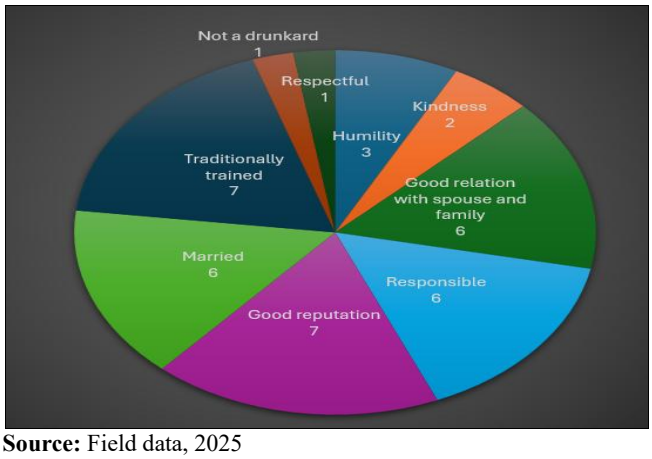
3.2 Roles of Traditional Marriage Counsellor

When the participants were asked who a Traditional Marriage Counsellor (TCM) is and their role, TCM 9 had this to say:

> *A traditional marriage counsellor is an elderly person who has been married and understands the values and norms of marriage. It is not everyone who is married who is a marriage counsellor. Practically because it is not everyone who is married who has been taught before marriage. To be, one must have been traditionally prepared for marriage. This helps one to be well-versed with the values and norms of marriage which he/she will pass on to the next generation. And the primary purpose of these counsellors is to prepare a man and woman for the reality of marriage. Also, it is to sensitize them on how to live as a couple.*

Also, TCM 6 averred that the role of traditional marriage counsellor is to prepare people for marriage both traditionally and in line with the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Equally, TCM 5 asserted that the role of TCMs is to teach those intending to enter the institution of marriage so that they make a family that is harmonious.

The researcher was interested to understand what makes a TCM unique and whether everyone who is married qualified to be a TCM. The findings are presented below.



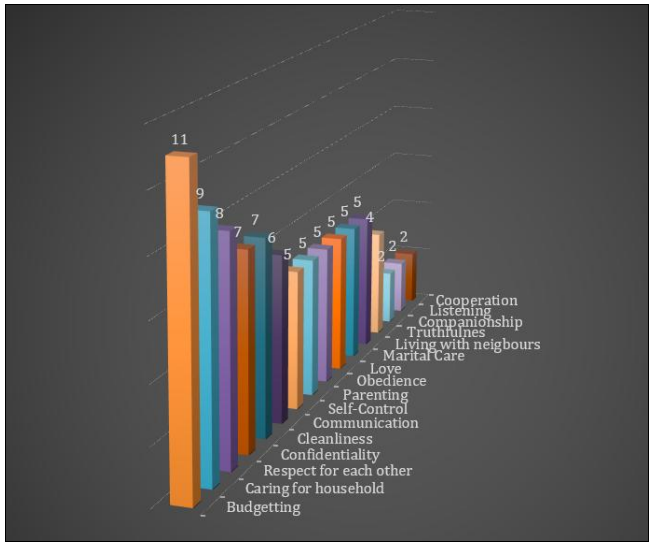
Source: Field data, 2025

Fig 3: Qualities of a Traditional Marriage Counsellor

Figure 3 shows the qualities that one must possess to be a traditional marriage counsellor. Being traditionally prepared and having a good reputation in society were strongly suggested by seven respondents; having a good relationship with your husband/wife and family, being a married and responsible person were separately mentioned by six participants; humility and kindness were stated three and two times accordingly; and not being a drunkard and being a respectful person recurred once.

3.3 Curriculum Offered by Traditional Marriage Counsellors

All the Traditional marriage counsellors who were interviewed confirmed that they have a syllabus they follow. They do not just 'wake up' and go to teach a client but there are essential knowledge and skills that every person preparing for marriage must possess to sustain a marriage. Figure 4 encapsulates the topics that were emphasized by the counsellors as essential for teaching to every person preparing for marriage.



Source: Field data, 2025

Fig 4: Topics covered during marriage preparation

Figure 4 illustrates the topics that are covered during the traditional preparation of a candidate for marriage. It is interesting to observe that most of the factors that causes divorce from the corpus literature are actually taught and, on the table, they are emphatically stated by many traditional marriage counsellors. For instance, financial management/budgeting (11) and how to take care of the household (welcoming visitors/relatives from both families) (9). Further, there are a number of different topics that were mentioned and will be presented.

3.4 Causes of Divorce from the viewpoint of Traditional Marriage Counsellors

In relation to this theme, TCM 1 emphatically stated that when people they taught divorced, it brought shame and disrepute to a counsellor. *This is because the entire process of marriage preparation is symbolically "ine nafula Ing'anda yanda, naimya na fwalika imbusa yanda"* [trans. It is the counsellor undressing and exposing my private affairs of my home and passing them on to my pupil]. It is with hope that since the candidates to marriage will be standing on the shoulders of giants (traditional teachings and counsellors), they are substantially equipped and thus less likely to dissolve their relationship.

Below we present the views of respondents regarding the causes of divorce.

Table 2: Factors causing divorce

Causes of divorce	Frequency
Infidelity	8
Phone	7
Social media (WhatsApp, Facebook)	6
Inadequate training before marriage	7
Lack confidentiality	6
Marriage as love making and love for money	7
Adoption of Western values contrary to local values	4
Misunderstanding over finances/debts	6
Family interference	3
Gender equality	4
Communication with ex-lovers	4
Jealousy	5
Disrespectful/disobedience	7
Knowledge gap between spouses	2
Lack of communication	6
Lying	6
Spousal negligence	4

Source: Field data, 2025

Table 2 indicates the factors that contributed to the dissolution of marriages according to the observations from Traditional Marriage Counsellors.

4. Discussion of Research Findings

This study found that all the fifteen (15) participants were either married or had been married before their spouses passed on. And everyone acknowledged that they had been traditionally taught before entering the institution of marriage even though the duration for this training varied from person to person and gender. One possible explanation for being married is that being a Traditional Marriage Counsellor is a profession that significantly involves the transmission of shared and lived experiences with your client. This is why we notice that all the respondents have been in marriage for a minimum of 25 years. This signifies that they are elderly members of society with extensive human experience. A similar observation is made by (Moeti, Go isiwa ga ngwetsi event: A tapestry of cultural learning, 2018) [31] when she asserts that knowledge gaining about culture and marriage from elderly members of the community is a very important trait during the *go isiwa ga ngwetsi* marriage rite. The candidate for marriage learnt valuable lessons about marriage from women in successful marriages by observing their practice and conduct, listening to and interacting with them. This way of learning provides an explanation why a traditional marriage counsellor must be a person of sound character and reputation.

More so, longevity and experience of marriage are indispensable to being a Traditional Marriage Counsellor. On this, Hinfelaar (2012) comments that every person is created to be on earth in order to become a *Mupashi Mukankala*, a rich and generous spirit/forebear, a twin-gender shade that grants life and health to the next generation. Elderly people are considered to be nearer to perfection once they have acquired some of the characteristics of the opposite gender. Now the notion of perfection here is a state of combining both the male and female modes of being. This state is a resemblance of

divinity which is both feminine and masculine. Here, man is called to be a transcendental being having no partial gender but complete. It is interesting to note that all the initiation rites are designed to teach the neophytes to attain transcendence through acquisition of the opposite gender. And this is possible with the guidance of Nachimbusa, who is called the tutor of the Transcendent and is considered a ritual male (Hinfelaar, 2012). A lesson to draw here is that parents and guidance of those intending to marry must make thorough consultation in the selection of the traditional marriage counsellors. It is indispensable that those authentically trained and of good reputation in marriage are considered if the candidates to marriage are to be properly existentially mutilated to attain transcendental wholeness.

Further, the data revealed that the training for women was longer than that of men. It was consistently reported by the participants that *"marriage is centred on a woman. Most things are known by a woman hence being grilled for a longer period. A man is told what he will find in a marriage but a woman practices what a man will find in a marriage.* This observation aligns with the findings of (Namonje & Mandyata, Traditional marriage counselling in Zambia: Exploring the views of stakeholders in Kabwe Urban, Central Province, 2017) [34] when they revealed that pre-marriage teachings stressed more on making a woman ready for marriage and family than they did on men for married life and whence the many broken marriages in the area of study. More so, Mercy Oduyoye in *Daughters of Anowa* has contended that ritual is an essential site through which women's subordination is sustained and enforced within many societies in Africa (Kaunda & Reddy, Pedagogies of Subservience? A Feminist Exploration of the Institution of Imbusa among the Bemba, 2023) [19]. Similarly, (Edet, 2006) [12] ponders that women's rituals among many ethnic groups in Africa operate as a ritual ideology with an intention of controlling, in a conservative way, the mood, the sentiment, the values and behaviour of women for the sake of the community. Much of the concern is to instruct, to direct, and to program them as they enter new roles and to stabilise society by preventing them from drifting too far from the roles they have assumed.

While the notice on the discrepancy on the duration of training is correct, its correlation to causing divorce is not supported by any data from this study. Firstly, the differences in the duration of preparation between woman and men possibly elucidates why there are few male traditional counsellors and more females (as shown on table 1) because there are a lot of activities that are involved in the preparation of a woman. This assertion aligns with what Hinfelaar (2012) found that one of the foundational roles of a woman among the Bemba people was *Chibinda wa Nganda*. This title entails that a married woman is the owner of the house. Hinfelaar locates this designation in Bemba legend which contends that man originally lived in grass-shelters. It was actually a woman who taught a man how to use the clay of the termite-hill to construct a mud. Nonetheless, the arduous task of completing the building by smearing clay on the inner walls and floor was a woman's; it is thereafter when she can construct the family hearth. Additionally, (Phiri, 2012) [38] substantiates that due to the importance attached to maternity (African parenthood), care and greater emphasis is laid on preparing girls as future mothers. Marriage instructions are intensive for women than they are for men. This is as a result of the distinct position of maternity in the community as the channel through which other members are added to the family and community. Evidently also, mothers are cherished in the family for their influence on the children before they are assimilated in the larger society. Thus, the intention of diligently training a woman in the said manner contradicts the notion of subservience to society or man.

Participants consistently pointed out that the role of Traditional marriage counsellors was to prepare those intending to marry for the marriage institution. That is, equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate the challenges and pleasures of marriage and family life. This aligns with the finding of (Mlundi, 2020) [30], reinforcing the significance of marriage lessons in assisting the candidate to make successful relationships and a family. While traditional marriage counsellors in Zambia have, in recent times, been cited to be desperately "…teaching any girl/woman, whether contemplating marriage or not, how to handle a man in bed" (Zambia Daily Mail, 2016) [48], the present study shows that at the core of marriage lessons is something larger than 'bedroom rites' but building and sustaining of a marriage and family. Relatedly, (Makwanise & Masuku, 2016) [26] points out that when a woman is about to get married among the Ndebele of Zimbabwe, she undergoes a rite called *Ukulaywa* (giving advice on the dos and don'ts of marriage). The purpose of this rite is to give advice to a woman about to get married and ultimately equip her with knowledge and skills to preserve the marriage. This entailed giving advice to a woman who was about to get married on how to conduct herself in the marriage and those that guide her are elderly women in the community who had wisdom relating to marriage. This practice groomed and instilled a sense of discipline in a woman and this would help her to behave in a manner acceptable her husband and his family. Thus, the chances of her husband complaining are reduced and this facilitated stability in a marriage (Makwanise & Masuku, 2016) [26].

The findings of this study deviates from prior literature suggesting that traditional marriage counselling is about sex (Zambia Daily Mail, 2016) [48] and demonic thereby creating negative attitudes in members of the public (Simbotwe, 2016) [43]; traditional marriage counsellors and the services that they offer are intended for preservation of marriage and building healthy relationships and family. Interestingly, Obioma Nnaemeka in *Nego-Feminism: Theorizing, Practicing, and Pruning Africa's Way*, states that woman are taught the art of subtle negotiation and navigation of patriarchy during such rituals. Nnaemeka brilliantly elucidates that African woman, using Nego-feminism, a feminism of negotiation which "knows when, where, and how to detonate patriarchal land mines; it also knows when, where, and how to go around patriarchal land mines" (Kaunda, Mother Earth, Mother Africa and African Women's Role in Indigenous Religions, 2021) [18]. The key lesson here is that traditional marriage teachings equip a candidate with the art of navigating and managing the politics of marriage and family life. It is no wonder that studies by (Mwanza, Phiri, Muyangana, & Chibamba, 2019) [33] and (Moeti, Go isiwa ga ngwetsi event: A tapestry of cultural learning, 2018) [31] accentuate the need to preserve and pass on marriage lessons as they help strengthen marriages.

4.1 Curriculum Offered by Traditional Marriage Counsellors

A notable trend that emerged from the data is that the curriculum offered by the Traditional Marriage Counsellors is detailed, diverse, systematic, rich and rigorous. It addresses almost all spheres of human living-promoting complementarity between husband and wife for a successful marriage. This finding deviated from previous literature that suggested that the curriculum followed in during pre-marriage and married traditional counselling sessions were more focused on subject of submission, with emphasis on women submission to their husbands in marriages. This was followed by how couples should handle each other in the bedroom and communication in marriage was least emphasized (Namonje & Mandyata, Traditional marriage counselling in Zambia: Exploring the views of stakeholders in Kabwe Urban, Central Province, 2017) [34]. In fact, the diversity of the topics covered reflects what (Phiri, 2012) [38] posited on marriage instructions as not being oriented towards physical and child bearing but including integral human formation and education. The curriculum that TCMs offer necessitates giving instructions to those intending to marry lessons that go beyond mere biological procreation to the extent of being capable to fend for themselves and their offsprings.

Interestingly, the data indicates that the topics covered during marriage preparation make up some of the most important values of Ubuntu philosophy. According to (Ajitoni, 2024) [3], this philosophy stresses the idea that a person's identity and sense of self are largely derived from their interactions with other people and their role in promoting the general welfare of the community. Additionally, it has acted as a moral compass, encouraging virtues like respect, empathy, compassion and cooperation and these values have been cardinal in promoting harmony and social cohesion, guaranteeing that groups cooperate for the benefit of all. Traditional Marriage Counsellors teach values such as respect, hospitality, cooperation, love, truthfulness and self-control and all these values are meant to help one become self-actualised and also to create a harmonious family and consequently, a community.

These values make up a value system through which they will make their daily decisions. An analysis of existing marriage and family relations, (Xamidullaevna, 2023) [46] has highlighted that major ingredient for sustainable existence of marriage -is the moral level, which contains, first of all, awareness of moral norms. The level of development of a person's moral consciousness principally impacts one's activities and behaviour in any area of social relations and the family is no exception. This assertion is consistent with what (Gonslaves, 1981) [14] stated that human choices are based on values. And thus, if a person will be a self-determining moral agent, then he/she must be in touch with their values. Candidates for marriage are equipped to make decisions that promote their welfare of their marriage, family and community. However, to act or not to act in that direction is a choice they have to make bearing in mind the consequences of it.

Reviewed literature showed that some marriages broke due to poor management of finances in the household. For instance, a report by (Dokko, Li, & Hayes, 2015) [11] confirmed that there is a connexion between credit scores and intimate relationships. Their survey revealed that majority American opted for a partner who is good with money over one who is physically attractive. People were more inclined to form committed relationships with those people whose scores were in the same range, and couples with high credit scores tended to stay together longer. And the opposite was also true. The study attributed the correlation to an expression of an individual's general trustworthiness and their commitment to non-debt obligations. Contradicts The failure to manage finance/budgeting was attributed to the fact that traditional marriage counsellors were not equipped and/or did not teach on matters of finances and budgeting as some studies by (Namonje & Mandyata, Traditional marriage counselling in Zambia: Exploring the views of stakeholders in Kabwe Urban, Central Province, 2017) [34] (Siamoonga, 2023) [42] and (Ngambi, 2024) [36] confirmed. The present findings suggest a contrary understanding as many/budgeting TCMs emphatically stated that financial management was part of the lessons that were taught to those that being prepared for marriage. The respondents indicated that they encouraged their candidates to plan together as a way to promote proper usage of resources. Those that do the contrary have tended to have relationship problems as earlier alluded.

4.2 Causes of Divorce from the viewpoint of Traditional Marriage Counsellors

The respondents repeatedly reported that the reason for the dissolution of marriages was because of lack of adequate marital preparation. This finding is related to what (Mwanza, Phiri, Muyangana, & Chibamba, 2019) [33] discovered that a lack of traditional marriage counselling was the major contributor to increased divorces in Ng'ombe compound. Their study observed that many people in Ng'ombe particularly the young men and women were just getting married without even notifying their parents and/or seeking counselling so as to be prepared and equipped for marriage life. A similar discovery was made by (McFadden, 2024) who attributed to breakdown of marriages to lack of pre-marriage counselling which helped people to be ready for the reality of marriage. Additionally, (Moeti, Go isiwa ga ngwetsi event: A tapestry of cultural learning, 2018) [31] made the same observation, however, she recommends that parents or guidance take up the responsibility to teach and prepare their children household chores so that when their turn to get married come, they can easily and smoothly fit into the new family and endure marital pressures that typically exemplify marriages. This lesson is relevant given the growing influence of Western culture and subsequent adoption of these values and, simultaneously, abandoning of our ethnic ethos. Parents and guides have a profound influence on the child and thus can inculcate the necessary skills, knowledge and values in them which may be handle in life.

Another factor contributing to divorce that emerged from the data was the use of social media. It is interesting to note that this element intertwined with other causes of divorce such as phone use, infidelity and poor communication. According to a Your Tango poll, divorce rates for poor communication accounted for 65% of the cases (YourTango, 2025) [47]. The findings of this study 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 a report by (Siame, 2021) [41] which found that social media addiction was ruining thousands of marriages yearly, with over 62,000 couples divorcing within

four years. In 2019, a seating in the Zambia Parliament heard that 62,798 couples divorced between 2016 and 2019 and the majority of these dissolution was social media abuse leading to breakdown in communication between husband and wife. Now, conversations between a wife and husband are a form of loving encounter and a practice that leads to a successful married life (Nwankwo & Peters, 2019) [37]. In fact, (Kumari, 2025) [23] asserts that spouses who effectively communicated and prioritized emotional closeness managed conflicts in a healthy and were more likely to report marital satisfaction. One can postulate that in the absence of good communication, there are many family problems that arise such as "excessive family conflict, effective problem-solving skills, lack of intimacy, weak emotional bonding and so on" (Damota, Gebretsadik, & Nigatu, 2020) [10]. A lesson to draw here is that couples must learn to reduce their phone/technological gadgets screen time and dedicate sometime to bond with their spouses and family. Doing so will assist them to deeply connect and know their wellbeing.

Related and facilitator of the abuse of social media which participants suggested to cause divorce was a phone. Presently, a phone is one of the most important technological devices such that majority of the people cannot do without it in their daily activities. A condition that is now called nomophobia. In as much as it is pertinent, an overly usage of a phone coupled with access to the internet was identified to be a major contribute to divorce by the respondents. This is consistent with the findings of (Mulenga, Mapoma, Halubanza, Kaira, & Mwiiya, 2023) [32] that "women with phones had 34% and 63% higher odds compared to those without phones and no access to the internet in rural and urban areas, respectively". More so, women living in rural areas but had access to the internet were found to have the highest odds of divorcing. The use of a phone with internet access meant that people could access social media. And apart from the challenge of poor communication that arises because of overusing social media, married people are facing the challenge of online infidelity. According to (Widiantari & Utari, 2019) [44], online infidelity denotes a "romantic and/or sexual relationship with someone other than the spouse, which begins with an online contact and is maintained mainly through electronic conversations that occur through online media". It is important to know that even though it is sustained through conversation online, some people physically meet for sexual intercourses and this is why studies by (Akpadago & Anovunga, 2018) [4] and (Ng'ambi, Ndhlovu, & Sichula, Causes of Divorce Based on Lived Experience of Divorced Persons in Lusaka, Zambia, 2023) [35] separately found extramarital affairs to very high among the respondents and a major cause of divorce.

Respondents highlighted that lack of confidentiality as a contributor to divorce. It was observed that instead of talking out an issue between husband and wife or with the assistance of TCMs, people posted their issues on social media like Facebook or TikTok. The finding is similar with what (Ng'ambi, Ndhlovu, & Sichula, Causes of Divorce Based on Lived Experience of Divorced Persons in Lusaka, Zambia, 2023) [35] discovered that male participants criticised their wives as they did not keep the marital challenges they went through; instead shared it with their friends, family and neighbours. Their study found that men were affected the most as publicizing the matter made them look as if they were not able to sort out their own issues and manage their home. This questions their leadership skills and they end up losing their self-esteem and pride as men and resulted into divorce. Even though we did not investigate how lack of confidentiality affects women and men, it is important for couples to have a premium of this value. It is only when they fail to resolve whatever is affecting their relationship must they seek help from TCMs. It would be wise to heed to (Jackson, 2016) [16] when he elucidates 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.

5. Conclusion

All in all, Traditional marriage lessons are evidently relevant and equip the candidates for marriage with sufficient knowledge and skills to navigate the dynamics and politics of marriage, family and society. In as much as we are witnessing serious social change punctuated by technological revolution and many people are of the view that TCMs' wisdom is parochial; the *esse* of man, metaphysically, culturally, physiologically and psychologically, is almost unchanging. What this suggests is that more than ever, we need authentically trained traditional marriage counsellors to pass on the philosophy, culture, religion and axiology of the local people not just for preparation of life's pleasures and pain but a solid formation of self-identity. The urgency is a matter of survival of the human species.

6. Recommendations

- This paper contends that there should be a serious consideration of incorporating indigenous culture into the curriculum given the growing number of Africans, and Zambians in particular, who are opting or willingly giving in to the Western culture and eschewing their own culture. It is imperative that government and interested stakeholders consider young people's preparation to enter the family as an essential component of the overall educational system. Here, government through the Curriculum Development Centre can engage Traditional Marriage Counsellors and rehearse what introductory lessons can set and at which grade of study. More so, the young people at tertiary colleges and Universities should be sensitized about marriage.
- The government, churches and other interested stakeholders should promote pre-marital counselling for those intending to marry and marital counselling to assist them internalise what they taught during pre-marital counselling. For those entering marriage for the first time, we propose that it be made mandatory for them. This will help curb divorce among young couples.
- The study recommends that government and interested stakeholders collaborate and support organisations such as the Ituna Herbal Cultural and Research Organisation (IHCHRO) for the preservation of our cultural knowledge, skills and values. Interested stakeholders can provide human capital and financial resource to support their endeavours and sharpen their counselling skills in line with conventional standards.
- There is need to sensitize on the use tech devices and

social media among people at every level of life. This is based on the observation made by the study that technology and social media are adversely breaking boundaries meant for physiological and psychological bonding in a relationship and family. There is need to reduce screen time and increase the time spent conversing with one another. This would will build bonding and decrease the chances of online infidelity.

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