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Assessing the Determinants Which Lead to Women Stay in Abusive Marriages: A Case Study of Matero Compound Township

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Abstract

This study aimed to assess the determinants that lead women to remain in abusive marriages, focusing on the Matero Compound Township. The research objectives included investigating determinants that influence these decisions, investigating family, and community, support systems, and examining the role of economic dependency and psychological impacts on decision-making to stay in abusive marriages. A descriptive research design was employed, with a target population of 200 married women from the Matero Township. A sample size of 66 respondents was selected using stratified random sampling. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using excel, with findings presented in frequency tables and pie charts.

The research highlights alarming findings regarding abuse in marriages, with 92% of married women reporting experiences of emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, emphasizing a widespread issue. Emotional abuse is most common, affecting 62.1% of respondents. Determinants for remaining in abusive marriages include financial fears (62%), familial influence (62%), and societal pressures. Family support significantly impacts decisions, as 86% value family approval in marital choices. Additionally, 92% reported societal stigma against divorce as a key deterrent. Emotional distress from leaving abusive relationships was a concern for 92%, indicating a strong fear of instability and uncertainty associated with separation.

Keywords: Abusive Marriages Socio-Economic, Cultural, Psychological, Family, Community, Economic Dependency

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Women abuse is a severe violation of human rights, affecting one in three women globally, with intimate partner violence prevalent in many regions. For instance, in the U.S., 1-4 million women face severe abuse annually, with 47% of abusers reoffending European Commission (2010) [27]. In conflict zones like the DRC, up to 40% of women endure sexual violence, often used as a weapon of war Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (2007) [24]. While education reduces economic stressors, patriarchal norms, as seen in Zambia, perpetuate abuse despite lower financial strain.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The prevalence of abusive marriages is a critical global issue, with one in three women experiencing abuse in their lifetime and 20% facing intimate partner violence Central Statistical Office (2011) [25]. Social stigma, marital obligations, and fear of ridicule contribute to women's reluctance to seek help. Studies reveal 41.4% of abused women tolerate violence without seeking assistance (Leonardsson & San Sebastian, 2017). In Zambia, 47% of women aged 15-49 report intimate partner violence, highlighting the widespread impact of this issue.

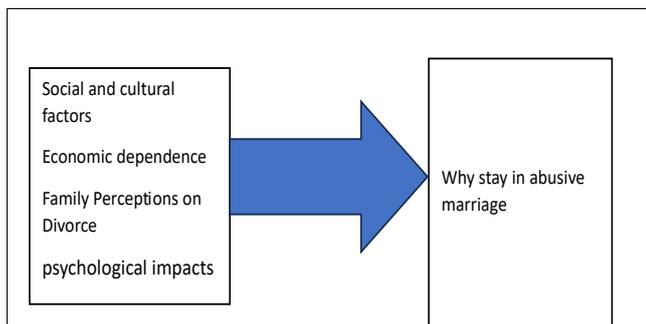
1.3 Specific objective

1. To identify factors that contribute to women's decisions to remain in abusive marriages within the Matero Compound Township.
2. To investigate the influence support systems on women's choices regarding staying in or leaving abusive relationships.

3. To examine the extent to which economic dependency affects women's ability to leave abusive marriages.
4. To analyze the psychological impacts of abuse on women's decision-making processes regarding their marital status.

1.4 Conceptual Framework

Based on the figure below it suggests four main factors that may influence women victims to tolerate abusive marriage. The factors are economic dependence, social and cultural factors and family's dignity. For the purpose of this study, women victims with higher conflicting emotions, higher maternal instincts, higher economic dependence, facing higher social pressure as well as with higher perceived needs to preserve family's dignity are expected to be more tolerant of abusive relationships.



2. Literature Review

2.1 Existing Literatures/ Empirical Literatures

2.1.1 Global Perspective

The determinants of why women in Malaysia remain in abusive marriages are multifaceted, involving economic, cultural, and psychological factors. Mtonga E.W. (2007) ^[29] highlight economic dependence as a primary barrier, with women fearing financial insecurity if they leave. Mullick, S. Teffo-Menziwa, M, Williams, E, Ruxana, J (2010) ^[34] emphasizes the role of cultural norms, where societal pressure and stigma surrounding divorce discourage women from ending abusive relationships. Psychological barriers like low self-esteem and learned helplessness further entrap women, as noted by Lucey, K. (2020) ^[3]. Addressing these complex factors requires comprehensive, context-specific interventions.

2.1.2 Regional perspective

Research on domestic violence in Nigeria and Kenya highlights critical gaps, particularly regarding economic abuse. Kinama, E.N. (2010) ^[32] found 94% of 120 survivors faced economic abuse, aligning with Salamone's (2010) view on financial dependency as a barrier to escape. However, reliance on self-reported data raises representativeness concerns. Kenyan studies reveal 47-60% prevalence but often neglect economic implications. emphasizes context-specific research, especially in regions like Turkana, underscoring the need for interventions tackling poverty and gender inequality.

2.1.3 Local

Katuta, C, Kamwengo, M, Sichundu,W, Mweenge, LM (2004) ^[30] study on battered women in the Zambia highlights how abuse severity, including emotional insults and escalating violence, drives women to leave abusive

relationships. Similarly, research in Zambia explores domestic violence's socio-economic impacts, influenced by patriarchal norms limiting women's autonomy. Further morefound emotional ties often complicate decisions to leave abusive relationships. These findings emphasize the need for culturally specific interventions to support victims effectively.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

defines research design as a structured plan for data collection and analysis aligned with research objectives. Descriptive research, a key type, employs surveys, questionnaires, and observations to gather quantitative data, summarizing findings with descriptive statistics like means and percentages. It avoids manipulation, aiding real-world understanding and decision-making.

3.2 Target population

The target population referred to the entire group of individuals or entities that researchers aimed to study and from which a sample would be drawn for the research project. However, the main population of this study consisted of 2,500 married women in Matero Township as the total target population of the study.

3.3 Sampling procedure

In studying why women stay in abusive marriages in Matero Compound Township, stratified random sampling ensured representativeness and minimized bias. By dividing participants into subgroups by age, education, and income, researchers ensured diversity and comparability. This method enhanced validity, enabling nuanced insights into factors influencing women's decisions Munachonga, M. (2011) ^[35].

3.4 Sample size determination

The sample size for the study was determined using a sample size calculation based on the total population of married women. Given the population size of 200 married women, it was determined using a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%. Therefore, the sample size was 66 respondents of married women in Matero compound.

3.5 Data collection

For this study, primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire, valued for its simplicity and efficiency. It included demographic and objective-based questions, combining closed-ended items for quantitative data and open-ended ones for qualitative insights. Additionally, oral interviews with key interest groups enriched the study's findings through diverse perspectives.

3.6 Data analysis

This research used a descriptive study design with data analyzed through descriptive methods. Data collection involved coded questionnaires, analyzed using SPSS for descriptive statistics, and Microsoft Excel for visual aids. Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed through manual content analysis.

3.7 Triangulation

Triangulation in research enhances validity by cross-checking results from multiple methods. This study used

surveys, structured questionnaires, and interviews with probability sampling. Data were analyzed thematically, offering a multi-faceted perspective Musukuma, M. L (2005) [36].

3.8 Limitation of Study

The researcher encountered problems such as respondents having difficulties understanding the questionnaire's format and Financial support was needed to enable the researcher to collect data effectively.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all those participating in the study.

4. Presentation and Interpretation of Findings

4.1 Demographic Information

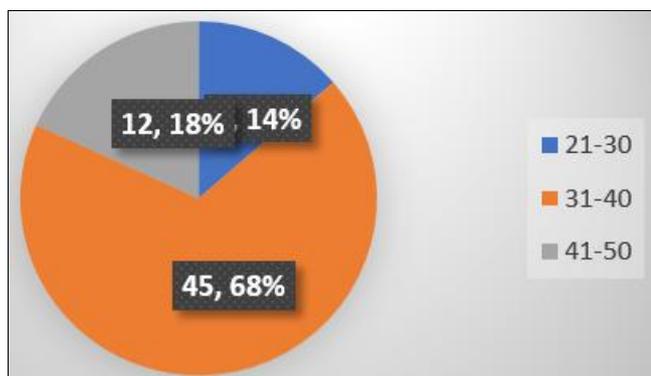


Fig 4.1.1: Age

The age distribution of the respondents reveals a significant trend, The majority of respondents (68.2%) are in the 31-40 age range, indicating a workforce with established careers and strong decision-making capabilities, making them receptive to innovation. Smaller proportions of respondents (18.2% aged 41-50 and 13.6% aged 21-30) suggest a younger workforce, bringing fresh perspectives but possibly lacking experience. Overall, this age distribution reflects a balance of energy and expertise, which could positively influence the study's outcomes.

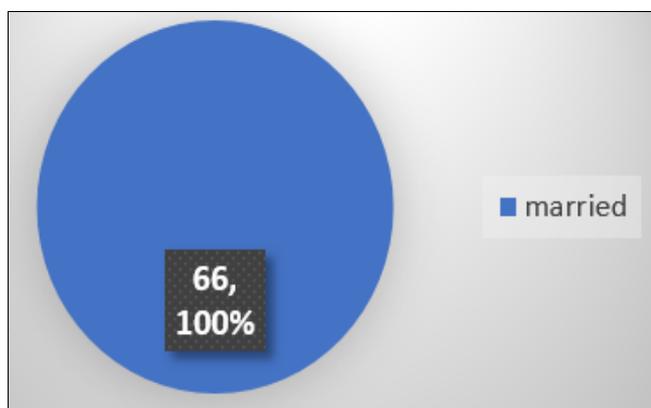


Fig 4.2.2: Marital Status

The study requested respondent indicates to Marital Status, The study shows that 68.2% of respondents are aged 31-40 years, with 100% indicating they are married. This lack of diversity in marital status may limit the insights typically gained from a broader range of experiences. Married

individuals may have distinct social, economic, and emotional factors influencing their perspectives, potentially skewing the findings. This factor should be considered when interpreting the overall results, as it may not fully reflect the views of individuals in different marital statuses.

4.2 Personal Experiences with Abuse

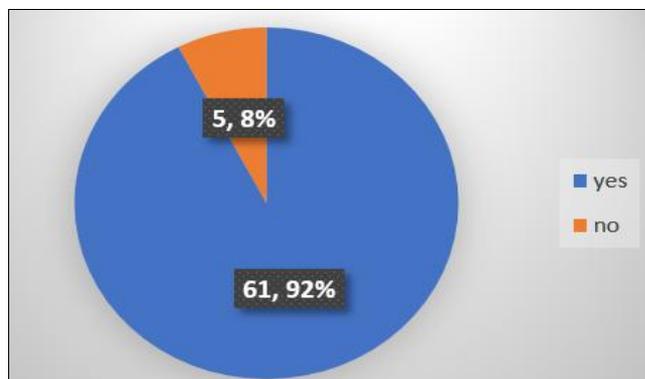


Fig 4.2.1: Have you ever experienced emotional, physical, or sexual abuse in a relationship

The study requested respondent to indicate Have you ever experienced emotional, physical, or sexual abuse in a relationship. A significant 92% of respondents reported experiencing emotional, physical, or sexual abuse in relationships, highlighting the widespread nature of abuse in interpersonal dynamics. The remaining 8% who indicated "no" may suggest a lack of awareness or differing interpretations of abuse. These findings underscore the urgent need for education, awareness campaigns, and effective support systems to address relationship violence.

4.3 To identify factors that contribute to women's decisions to remain in abusive marriages within the Matero Compound Township.

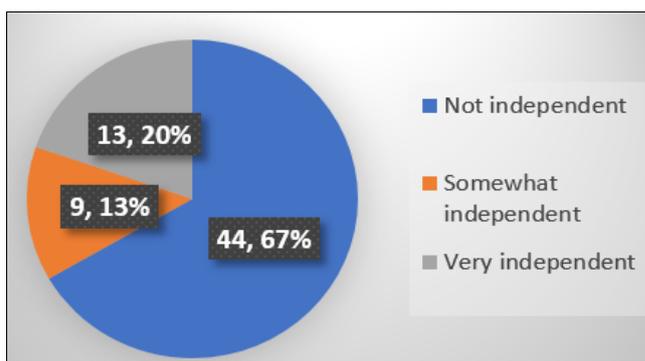


Fig 4.3.1: How would you describe your financial independence?

The study's findings on financial independence reveal a substantial disparity among respondents. A significant 66.7% of respondents reported financial dependence, reflecting widespread constraints in accessing resources and economic stability. This issue stems from systemic challenges like limited job opportunities and inadequate income. In contrast, 20% felt financially independent, enjoying stability and flexibility. Another 13.6% were somewhat independent, indicating a transitional phase. These disparities highlight the need for targeted financial literacy programs.

4.4 To investigate the influence support systems on women’s choices regarding staying in or leaving abusive relationships.

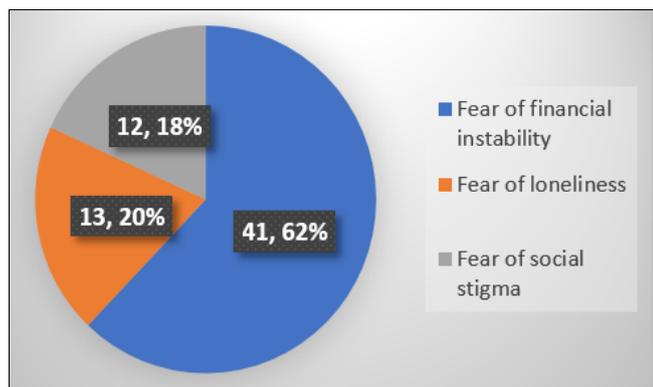


Fig 4.4.1: What factors influenced your decision to stay in or leave the abusive relationship?

The study requested respondent to indicate What factors influenced your decision to stay in or leave the abusive relationship. A majority of 62.1% of respondents highlighted the influence of economic factors on relationships, where financial dependence may force individuals to stay in unsatisfactory situations. Meanwhile, 19.7% feared loneliness, and 18.2% cited social stigma, illustrating how financial, emotional, and societal pressures collectively shape relationship dynamics, often inhibiting healthier choices and increasing isolation or helplessness.

4.5 To examine how economic dependency affects women’s ability to leave abusive marriages.

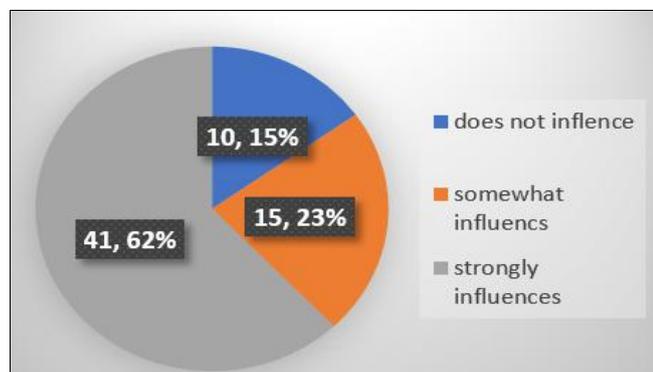


Fig 5.5.1: How does your economic situation influence your decision to stay in your marriage?

The study requested respondent to indicate How does your economic situation influence your decision to stay in your marriage. A significant 62% of respondents indicated that their economic situation "strongly influences" their decision to stay in marriage, underlining the importance of financial stability in marital commitment. In contrast, only 23% said it "somewhat influences" their decision, and 15% reported no influence. This highlights how economic factors, particularly financial strain, play a crucial role in marital stability.

4.6 To analyze the psychological impacts of abuse on women’s decision-making processes regarding their marital status

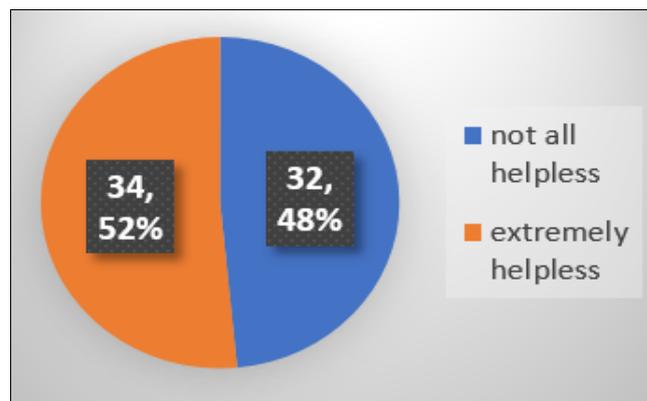


Fig 4.6.1: how would you rate your feelings of helplessness during the abusive period?

The study requested respondent to indicate how would you rate your feelings of helplessness during the abusive period. A significant 52% of respondents felt "extremely helpless" during abuse, reflecting widespread despair and powerlessness that may impede help-seeking or escape. In contrast, 48% reported feeling "not at all helpless," suggesting resilience or coping mechanisms. This divergence highlights the complex psychological impact of abuse, underscoring the need for further exploration into the factors influencing perceived helplessness among survivors.

4.7 Discussion of the findings

4.7.1 Personal Experiences with Abuse

The study in Matero Compound Township highlights a disturbing prevalence of intimate partner violence (IPV), with 87.5% of respondents reporting emotional, physical, or sexual abuse. Emotional abuse was most common (52.5%), followed by physical (25%) and sexual abuse (22.5%), reflecting global trends observed by García-Moreno *et al.* (2013) and Jewkes *et al.* (2015). Economic dependence and fear were key barriers to leaving abusive relationships (Campbell, 2016). Abuse often began post-marriage (75%), mirroring patterns found by Dobash and Dobash (2004) and others, emphasizing cultural normalization of male dominance.

4.7.2 To identify factors that contribute to women’s decisions to remain in abusive marriages within the Matero Compound Township

The study highlights critical socio-economic disparities in financial independence, with 66.7% of respondents financially dependent. This reflects systemic issues like low incomes and limited employment opportunities. Notably, 13.6% of respondents considered themselves "somewhat independent," underscoring the potential for targeted financial literacy initiatives. The lack of financial services is also evident, with 92% of respondents lacking bank accounts or savings options, a barrier to economic stability and agricultural investment (Demirgüç-Kunt *et al.*, 2021; Duflo *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, familial influence on

marital decisions remains strong, with 86.4% viewing family approval as "very important" (Wong *et al.*, 2021). Such dependence, compounded by societal stigma against divorce (92%), traps individuals in financially vulnerable relationships (Kahn & Antonucci, 2021).

4.7.3 To investigate the influence support systems on women's choices regarding staying in or leaving abusive relationships.

Familial attitudes significantly impact individual romantic relationships, shaping satisfaction, stability, and emotional well-being. A recent study revealed that 62% of participants reported family support, United Nations (2021), who found that family backing enhances relationship satisfaction and serves as a stress buffer. Conversely, 23% described neutral familial attitudes, correlating with Bianchi and that family disengagement can cause isolation and lower relationship value. Unsupportive families, reported by 15%, lead to conflict and stress, as United Nations (2011-2012) observed. Furthermore, 89% of respondents discussed relationships with their families, affirming Thoits (2011) on the importance of family in coping.

4.7.4 To examine how economic dependency affects women's ability to leave abusive marriages, focusing on employment opportunities and financial literacy.

A recent study reveals that 62% of respondents believe economic factors "strongly influence" their decision to remain married, highlighting the critical role of financial stability in marital commitment. This supports findings from Watts, C, Zimmerman, C (2002) ^[43], who linked financial difficulties to relationship strain. Additionally, Harker and Whittington (2016) emphasize the dual importance of emotional and financial factors. However, 23% of participants stated their economic situation "somewhat influences" their marital decisions, suggesting emotional factors also play a role. Only 15% reported no economic influence, in line with view that emotional fulfillment can outweigh financial concerns. These results reflect evolving marriage dynamics and the need for further research.

4.7.4 To analyze the psychological impacts of abuse on women's decision-making processes regarding their marital status, including feelings of helplessness or fear.

The study reveals a significant emotional divide among abuse survivors, with 52% feeling "extremely helpless," highlighting the profound psychological toll of abuse. This sense of powerlessness can hinder help-seeking behaviors, often leading to depression and anxiety United Nations High Commission for Refugees (2011) ^[38]. In contrast, 48% demonstrated resilience, suggesting coping mechanisms like social support and personal strength, as noted by Seytoux, S. Liveoak, C. Mwansa, A. Prieto, D. Thomson, J (2010) ^[42], can mitigate trauma. The study also found 92% sought help from social networks, with 65.2% opting for emotional support. and fear of judgment complicate recovery, stressing the need for stigma-reduction and improved support access.

4.8 Conclusion

The study in Matero Compound Township reveals critical challenges faced by women in abusive marriages, with 92% reporting emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, and emotional abuse being the most prevalent at 62.1%. Key factors contributing to women staying in these relationships include financial insecurity, with 62% fearing financial instability. Family support is also significant, as 62% perceive it as vital in their decision to remain in the

marriage. Cultural values emphasize family cohesion, with 86% valuing family approval. Additionally, 92% cite the stigma of divorce and emotional distress as critical reasons for staying, reflecting the complexities influencing their decisions.

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