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Effects of divorce in the church: a case study of selected
CITAM churches in kenya (CITAM Valley Road, CITAM
Woodley, CITAM Ngong)

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The church is expected to contribute to the stable marriage and ensure that it has put measures in place that will reduce the rate of divorce as much as possible. The purpose of the paper is to determine the effects of divorce in the selected churches of CITAM in Kenya. The objectives is to establish whether divorce has any effect on the psychological wellbeing of children and spouses affected, some of the causes of divorce, and the role of CITAM in reducing divorce in the church.

Methodology: The paper adopted qualitative research methods to obtain in-depth information on the situation. The study used a descriptive research design and the target population of the research was 100 church members who have undergone the divorce, from which the researcher was able to obtain a sample of 27 participants through the saturated sampling technique. The data was collected using interviews. The data was analyzed using QDA miner lite 2.0.7. The data was presented using tables and charts.

Results: Some of the causes of divorce include infidelity, variation in expectations, communication breakdown, and lack of support system, finances, in-laws, abuse and wrong orientations to marriage. CITAM should enhance support to families and enhance premarital counselling. Divorce causes psychological problems to divorced spouses and children and also causes stigmatization.

Recommendations: The church needs to diversify means in which its members are empowered on how to embrace God's teaching much more than their tradition or culture. The church members are aware of the biblical teaching that discourages them from divorce and therefore the church needs to diversify means by which they live according to God's word which is the pillar for every marriage. The church needs to improve its premarital counseling as this is the building block of marriage. The church should also intentionally have professional counselors who have experience in marital issues and who will not mislead those who come for help in the church. The church needs to develop programs that can support church members who find themselves in troubled marriages by coming up with counseling programs that identifies with the affected church members.

Key words: *effects of divorce, church, CITAM churches*

Background of the Study

There could be several reasons for the rise of divorce cases in the world today. One of the reasons could be that society has accepted the issue today more than in the past. Another reason could be that fewer people belong to religiosity that does not directly oppose divorce,

or many people have held onto church policies and doctrines but forgotten the real teachings of God concerning such matters. This gives some hint about why divorce is on the rise.

O'Donovan notes rightly that: "There is probably no desire that is stronger for most people than the desire for the opposite sex. Sexual desire was given by God to be used for blessing in marriage and the procreation of children, it is probably both the most universal pleasure and the most universal problem in the world" (O'Donovan 2000, 74). Some are married because of desire, some wanted children, others were forced, yet others entered marriage either early or at a delayed age but more significantly in Africa, married men and women want names for themselves in the society. Occasions for divorce presented themselves once expectations were not met.

Mungai notes in the 2014 edition survey that "six percent of women aged 20-24 are already divorced or separated which is a proportion that almost doubles from two decades ago" (Mungai 2015). Things, however, have since changed and the divorce rate has gone up in the society in general and this reflects the state of the church because over 80% of Kenyans we are told, are Christians. For a long time, some believers have believed that we should not even discuss the effects of divorce because according to the Scriptures, it should not happen in the first place. However, the issue of divorce can be traced back to the time of Moses during the Old Testament as indicated in the Bible in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. The New Testament as well has a record of Jesus' teaching about divorce as hinted in Matthew 17:4-6.

The Holy Bible indicates in Mathew 19:6, "when a man and woman come together, they are no longer two but one". God's plan was for the two to enjoy a long-lasting unity together. Furthermore, the Bible teaches that whatever God has joined together in marriage, no one should separate. Moreover, in the book of Malachi 2:16, God says that he hates divorce.

Statement of the Problem

Divorce is emerging as a very common thing in society today and it leaves a negative effect on the parties involved and society at large from the partners who separated to their children. A confession by a divorcee after her divorce stated that "she saw herself as a nonperson or a useless person all of a sudden" (Everett and Jenks 2018). This is an indication of the negative effects that are attached to divorce at a personal level and in society. Despite the effects, divorce is cutting across all ages. Young couples can easily wake up one morning and decide to start living separately. Old couples who have lived together for a long time also make a decision to divorce after many years of living together and having children. This has contributed a great percentage of the increased number of couples divorcing in church. "By 2010, almost one-half of ever-married persons had been divorced or separated by the time they reached their late 50s" (Kennedy and Ruggles 2014). This is an indication that divorce among Christians is on the rise undoubtedly giving the world another opportunity to shout. "Some sociologists are even reporting that religious conservatives divorce more than the rest of the society" (Martin 2014). And most of them die silently without really getting help on how to survive with the effects that come with divorce. "The rate of divorce has increased among people who identify themselves as Christians but rarely attend church. However, among those that attend church regularly, 38 percent have divorced or are in the process of divorcing" (Wright 2010, 133). Hence the study seeks to fill this gap by researching deeper on the effects of divorce especially within the church in Kenya and more specifically a study on the effects of divorce in the church on selected CITAM churches in Kenya.

General Objective of the Study

The objectives of this article are as follows:

- i. To establish whether divorce has any effect on the psychological wellbeing of the children and spouses affected.
- ii. To establish some of the possible causes of divorce in the church today.
- iii. To establish the role Christ Is the Answer Ministries plays in the reduction of divorce in the church.

Literature Review

The society today is experiencing the rise of divorce cases in which the church is part of it. An increase statistic is indicating its rise and facts relating to the decrease of stability of the nuclear family. Divorce rates have greatly increased in the past few years making many to fear the institution of marriage. With rising divorce rates and alternative family forms, marriage has increasingly lost its unique position as the only accepted unit to establish an intimate relationship (Das 2016, 3).

Nicholas in his book indicates that “Many people view divorce as unfortunate but sometimes necessary. There are segments of the population, however, who have intense feelings about it. Some people applaud the availability of divorce, regarding it as a basic freedom, while others deplore it. Each group has its political advocates. In the last fifteen years, more than thirty state legislatures have deliberated legislation that would toughen divorce laws; language urging reconsideration of no-fault divorce appeared in the 2000 Republican Party platform. Even among academics who study divorce, there are some who believe it inflict little or no harm on children, while others regard it as a source of deep and lasting trauma” (Wolfinger 2005, 1).

Divorce has gained momentum in recent days but traditionally it was highly discouraged because of the effects that come with it. Casey Whitaker in his book indicates that “23% of born-again Christians have divorced 2 or more times. For every 100 new marriages, 51 end in divorce. 33% of born-again Christians have divorced their spouses, a rate statistically equal to our non-Christian and pagan counter parts”. 90% of all divorces among Christians occurred after they came to Christ. “In the late 1800s, when the majority of churches believed marriage was permanent while a spouse was living, 1 in 10 marriage relationships ended in divorce and it was considered an epidemic. In 1920, 1 in 7 couples divorced: in 1960, 1 in 4 couples divorced; in 1974, 1 in 3 couples divorced: and today, on average 1 in 2 couples believe marriage is not a covenant with God and each other” (Whitaker 2009, 46).

In Biblical perspectives in the Holy Bible, when the Pharisees came up to Jesus to test him by asking, is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause? He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So, they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined, let not man separate.” They said to him, “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?” He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning, it was not so. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.” (Matthew 19:3–9 ESV).

Whitaker indicates that “the marriage of God the Father with Israel (including Israel and Judah) under the Old Testament (Covenant) took the death of Jesus. The marriage of Christ (God in

the flesh: Isaiah 9:6, Matthew 1:23, John 1:1, John 1:14, John 8:58, John 10:30, John 20:28,29, 1 Timothy 3:16, 1 Timothy 4:10, 13) and the Titus 2:10, 2 Peter 1:1, 1 John 5:7, Revelation 22: church under the New Testament (Covenant) illustrate the permanence of marriage until death. Divorce does not end marriage. Only death can end the marriage covenant and free one to marry another" (Whitaker 2009, 89).

The word that is important for us in the above passage for our purposes is the Greek word *pornea* translated in the ESV as "sexual immorality". The word has many meanings but to our study it just indicates the act of sexually engaging with another person who is not your lawful wife or husband. "And you shall not lie sexually with your neighbor's wife and so make yourself unclean with her. You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination. And you shall not lie with any animal and so make yourself unclean with it, neither shall any woman give herself to an animal to lie with it: it is a perversion". (Leviticus 18:20–24 ESV).

"If a man takes his sister, a daughter of his father or a daughter of his mother, and sees her nakedness, and she sees his nakedness, it is a disgrace, and they shall be cut off in the sight of the children of their people" (Leviticus 20:10–21 ESV) Explicit Divorce Allowances.

The church could encourage fellowship for married couples as the greatest tools to reduce the divorce rate with small group ministry, where couples can get together and share their life with other couples. When this is done it will be incredible and encouraging to learn and discover that they are not the only couples going through what they are experiencing. "Churches support marriage and family life in a society where many provided formal counseling for couples with marital problems" (Konieczny 2016, 23).

Marriages can be enhanced using different perspectives. A church can diversify its teachings by inviting external speakers, with different approaches on how to deal with family issues. This can be very instrumental. A different perspective integrated on how to deal with day to day marital aspects will be incredibly important to a couple, giving them the insight needed to work through any challenge that comes their way. "Many troubled couples will need further counseling beyond the sessions outlined in the brief marriage counseling model" (Rassieur 2014, 28).

The church could engage in personal development to be able to grow couples as the church other than concentration on numerical growth. There is a need for that church to participate in the growth of the church members through personal development. In such a way a healthy church grows healthy Christians. This could be applied in varied ways, emotional, spiritual, or interpersonal, and mental. A church could provide numerous opportunities for personal development, all of which naturally spills over into a marriage relationship. "The organization, in short, provides an opportunity for personal development" (Alexander 2017, 15).

In his research conducted in 2016, Rehnelt indicated that "being married was once a huge moment in someone's life". This is a decision that needs to be made after a lot of consideration as this involves selecting a life partner therefore, if one makes a wrong choice she or he will have to live with the consequences. "They see marriage as something to be enjoyed after having a career and after having children" (Brandon 2016, 34). This narrative needs to change for marriages to last and that is why possible ways need to be highlighted on how divorce cases can be prevented.

Methodology

A qualitative research method was used for the study, to establish the effects of divorce on the church in CITAM Valley Road, Woodley, and Ngong in Kenya to be able to obtain more insight into the area of study. Qualitative research methods are a study of something that is “not quantitative (Fishwick 2012, 39).

The study adopted a case study model that provided an in-depth look at the area under the study on divorcees at the selected churches in CITAM. The subjects to the study were church members of Christ is the Answer ministries who have divorced. A case study was used to inquire about the identifiable cases with boundaries that seek to provide an in-depth understanding of the cases (Creswell 2007, 74). A case study is “a research strategy and an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context” (Creswell 2007, 74). This descriptive design was used to investigate the effects of divorce in the selected churches of CITAM to research the effects of divorce in the church. Since this is a qualitative research, the study used open-ended interviews to formulate themes for data collection. That is to say that, the less structured method is general and comparable for internal validity and contextual understanding, and therefore, it was useful for obtaining data from well-formulated interviews and focus groups. Also, the procedure was practical since this is both a library and field research.

The target population will be a hundred divorcees who will be from the selected church of CITAM (Njoroge 2020). The researcher will obtain this from the membership of the group. The researcher will be able to establish divorcees who are the members of the divorcee’s group. The researcher, therefore, worked with the leader of the group of the divorces of CITAM from selected CITAM congregations to achieve its purposed goal. The description of the population is a detailed explanation of the population under study (Christiansen 2014).

Table 1: Target Population

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Male	50	50%
Female	50	50%
Total	100	100%

Sample and Sampling

In this study three centers of research were identified in Nairobi county and this were; CITAM Valley Road, CITAM Woodley, and CITAM Ngong. The three represented the rest of the population where 100 divorcees were selected. A saturated sampling technique was adopted in which the researcher was able to determine a sample size of 27 participants and any additional responses was not going to make any difference. The researcher endeavored to obtain a sample size of around 27 divorcees.

Table 2: Sample Size

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Male	13	50%
Female	14	50%
Total	27	100

Sample Techniques

A saturated sampling technique was adopted where simple random sampling and convenience sampling was used to obtain the sample for the study from the 100 divorcees. This techniques gave all the anticipated respondents an equal chance of being selected in the study. The researcher randomly identified respondents from the selected assemblies of CITAM to participate in the study.

Data Collection Tools

The researcher used interview schedules to collect data from the respondents. “Data collection is the process of gathering data and evaluating it systematically to obtain insights that solve business challenges and overcome them. For acquiring pertinent data, it is necessary to ensure the following one important essential practice: Purposeful: Is your data collection process aligned to meet specific, meaningful objectives that impact the business positively” (King and Horrocks 2010, 1). The researcher collected data at the time when there was a nationwide lock down due to Covid-19 pandemic. Because of the social distance rule that had been imposed by the government, the researcher called respondents on phone and recorded the interviews which were later transcribed to text for analysis. The data researcher used tables and charts to analyze and present the data.

FINDINGS

Response Rate

The study targeted to interview 27 participants: nine from each assembly but managed to interview 25 participants. The 25 participants: 9 participants from CITAM Ngong, 8 from CITAM Woodley, and 8 from CITAM Valley Road and this response formed a 93% response rate. The researcher’s assigned codes to the 25 participants where the first participants acquired code 001 in ascending order to the last participant who acquired code 025.

Gender of Respondent

The researcher was able to interview both the male and the female to be able to obtain the perspective of both. The Male were 8 participants and the female were 17 participants. The researcher was able to get more female than the male because the divorcees' group of CITAM has more females than the male who have enrolled as members.

Period of Divorce

When the researcher sort to establish how long they had been divorced, the responses were as indicated in the diagram below.

Distribution of codes (Frequency)

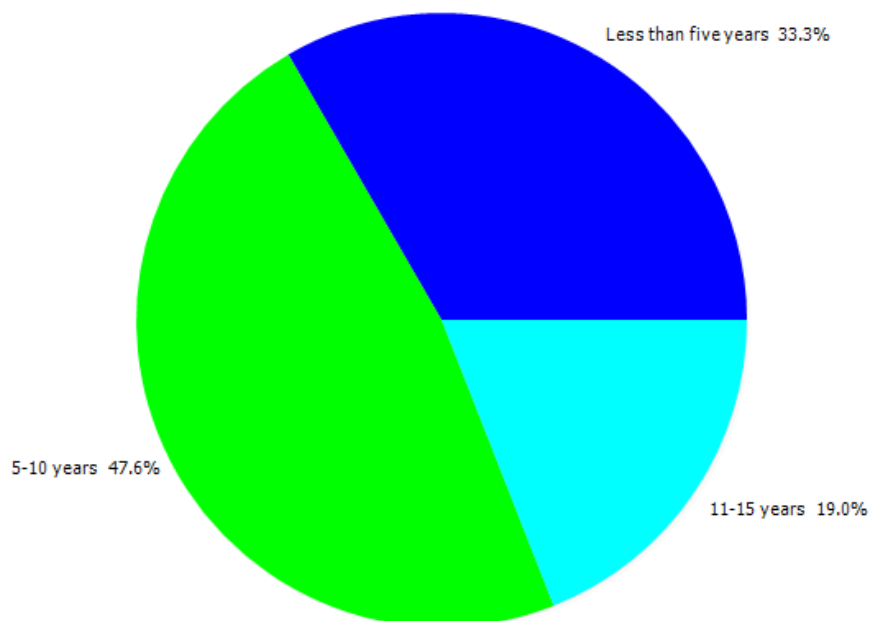


Figure 1: Period of divorce

The researcher was able to categorize the responses into three categories. The responses indicated out of the 25 participants 12 of them have been divorced between 5-10 years and this were the majority, while 8 participants had been divorced for five years and less. The last group of 5 participants had been divorced between 11-15 years. The results, therefore, reveal that, as the years go by the trend indicates the divorce rate is at a rise. The divorce cases that have lasted for 10 years and less are very high compared to those divorce cases that have lasted beyond 10 years. As stated by respondent 011, *“I have been divorced since 2011 and that should be about 8 years, I’m even trying to look for somebody else now”*.

Number of Children

When the researcher sort to determine the number of children affected by divorce, the responses were as indicated in the diagram below:

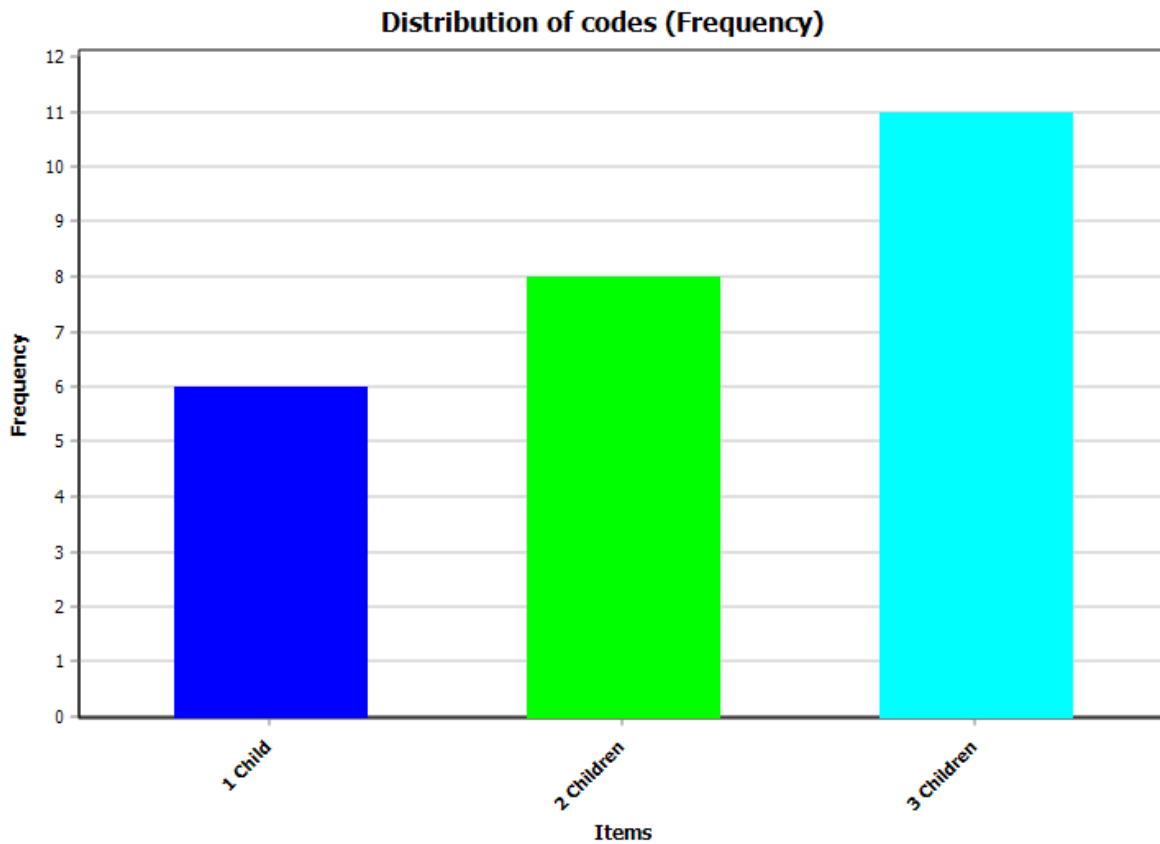


Figure 2: Number of children

The researcher was able to categorize the responses into three categories: Out of the 25 participants the highest category was of those who had three children and this were 11 participants, followed by 8 participants who had 2 children, and the last group was of 6 participants who had one child. The results reveal that the majority of the couples that have divorced had large families.

The Possible Causes of Divorce.

When the researcher sort to determine the possible causes of divorce among married couples, the responses were as indicated in the diagram below:

Distribution of codes (Frequency)

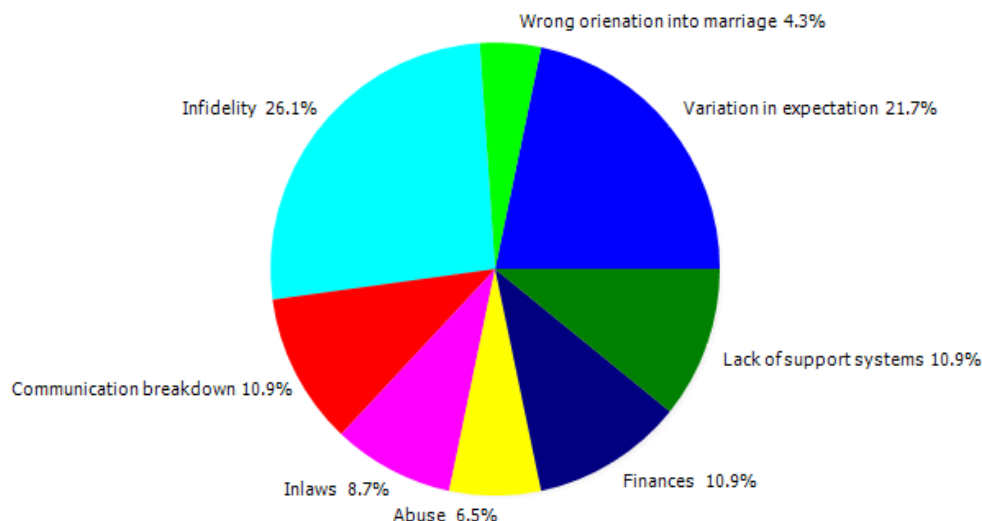


Figure 3: The possible causes of divorce.

On the possible causes of divorce, the study obtained eight themes: Infidelity, wrong orientation into marriage, variation in expectation, communication breakdown, and lack of support systems, finances, In-laws, and abuse.

Infidelity

7 out of the 25 participants stated that the cause of their divorce was because of infidelity. These participants believe that infidelity is unacceptable and that is why they thought the solution to that was to divorce their spouse. As stated by participant 005, “*I think there is a lot of mistrust, there is a lot of mistrust, and people don’t trust each other.*” Participant 006 stated that the final cause of our separation now he can say was infidelity.

Variation in expectation

Six participants out of the 25 participants indicated that variation in expectation from the marriage partners was a cause of divorce. This was established when they found out that their partners are not able to perform certain duties and responsibilities. These group of participants felt cheated when they get married and their expectations are not met and this leads to disappointment and hence the decision for divorce. According to participant 016 “*Sex dissatisfaction is the major cause in my case, sex for us was a headache maybe because we were not cultivating friendship in our marriage. When getting married you have high expectations from your partner then when you reach there it is not what you thought.*” As expounded by participant 011 “*Wrong expectations of marriage where people go in expecting*

that the other party is perfect, then getting disappointed as they lack the understanding that marriage is about edifying and building each other.”

Communication breakdown

The communication breakdown as identified by the researcher revealed that 3 participants out of the 25 participants felt that when the spouses are not communicating well, it leads to divorce of some couples because when couples are not able to speak to each other it makes them feel that they cannot continue leaving with each other. As stated by participant 022 “this leads to communication breakdown due to the misplacement of priorities.” As expounded by participant 007, “I will say that mostly communication breakdown in the marriage leads to divorce.”

Lack of support systems

The researcher identified that the participant lacked support that could help them overcome the challenges that affect marriages. From the findings, 3 participants out of the 25 participants needed a support system such as the set up church structures on how to help the spouses when they are undergoing the challenges. As alluded by participant 023, “*Poor support system contributed to the increased cases of separation and divorce. Church is judgmental or un-equipped to handle the issue which frustrates the situation further even leading to divorce. Another issue is poor teachings where the two parties are not well aware of how to go about safeguarding the marriage.*” Participant 024 further expounded that, “both parties also find that they do not get the support they need from their spouse and therefore end up looking for it elsewhere, at the end of it, the unity of the family is compromised.” Further, participant 009 said that “*it is unfortunate that even some church leaders and I should say 95% have no idea how to help but will sympathize with you and promise to pray with you only to get something to share with others. It is a sad situation.*”

Finances

The findings indicated that finances among the married people can pose a problem. Where spouses have no agreement on how the finances of the family are to be spent, they are bound to cause a challenge. When there is a lack of transparency on financial matters, there is a possibility of that contributing to divorces as alluded by 3 participants out of the 25 participants. As explained by participant 012, “*the other one is financial positions like in my case, I had an accident and after some time her left and therefore there was no commitment for her to stand with me when I had no job and I was sick.*”

The same sentiments were echoed by participant 017, “*Financial issues is the major thing especially in my case. We started in the wrong place where I gave my wife the best of life, traveling places until she resigned from work. Things become worse when our businesses started going down and I saw her change each day. It was very hard for me. She left the first time but came back when she realized my businesses had picked up. After that, she left me again four years afterward when things went down and therefore the major thing for me was finances sir.*”

In-laws

The findings reveal that 2 participants out of the 25 participants stated that the involvement of the in-laws in marriages needs to be taken or treated with caution because if allowed an opportunity, they tend to go beyond the boundaries which are likely to lead to divorce in marriages. As stated by participant 015 “yes, I have told you a few things like interference

from the father-in-law when I gave birth to twins and also i am born in town so I don't know how to plough in the shamba and this did not go well with my father in-law because he told his son to get another wife that can help with field work." As elaborated by participant 020 where he said, *"I think there is a lot of interference from the family from both side."*

Abuse

The researcher was able to establish that when abuse of one of the spouses is present in a marriage, it becomes detrimental and it leads to divorce as some of the partners in a marriage are not able to tolerate. They said that they rather opt out of the marriage than sit there to be abused. 2 participants out of 25 participants felt that they rather go for a divorce than be abused by their loved ones. As explained by participant 002, *"For us, it was the issue of domestic violence and that is why I moved on but if it was anything else I would have stayed but now violence was hard otherwise I could have died."*

Wrong orientation into marriage

The last participant felt that the reasons behind getting into marriage determines its success or failure. She indicated that if someone starts with God, the marriage institution will succeed. As alluded by participant 1 *"I think one of the reasons is that there is peer pressure and also the pressure that you are aging and there is no man or no woman, so there is pressure, and because of this we cannot take time to listen to God and for God to show us direction so we just jump into marriage because our friends are getting married."*

To what extent does CITAM need to contribute to the reduction of separation and divorce? Do you think they have played any role or should play any role?

When the researchers asked the participants the role that CITAM needs to play in the reduction of divorce, and their opinion, if they feel, that the church has played any role or the role that they need to play, the responses were as indicated in figure 10 below.

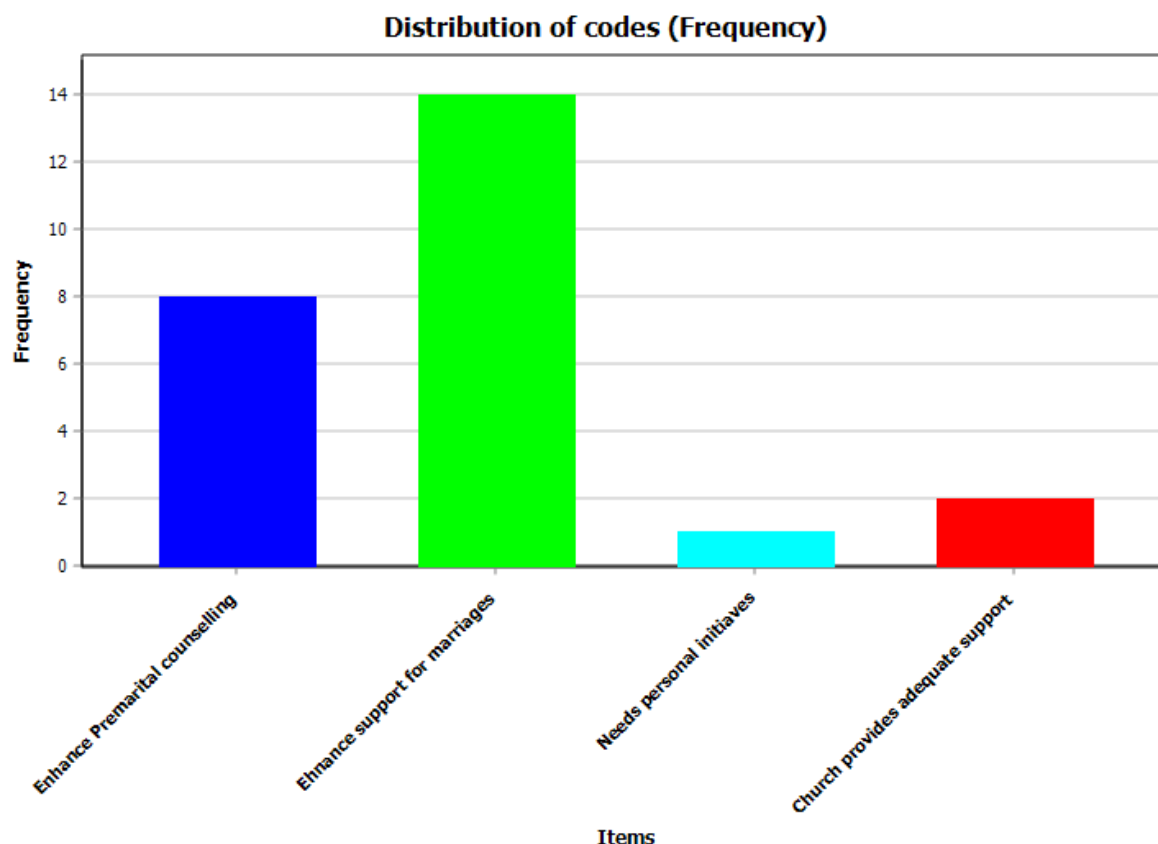


Figure 4: What role does CITAM need to play in the reduction of divorce

On the role that CITAM plays in the reduction of divorce, four major themes emerged from the data; CITAM needs to enhance support for marriages, enhance premarital counselling, the church provides adequate support, and the least one there is a need for personal initiatives.

Enhance support for marriages

On the role of the church, the majority of the participants; 14 participants out of 25 participants felt the need for it to enhance support for marriages because it is from the church that people draw strength and inspiration to go through difficult situations. As stated by participant 010, *“a lot of counseling should be done, and even after that, I have raised that issue with my bishop’s wife. After these guys get married, do you talk to them in the first years of marriage? Do you tell them the experiences that they should go through? How they should handle this person you have just been given to and you want to make a wife. You go and find that things are different after you are married and nobody is there to guide you on what happens there. Even on sexual issues, issues of intimacy, and all of that.”*

According to participant 013 *“mmmm ok to me, it was a little challenging because the only person I could talk to was like Florence (church admin) where I had challenges but beyond that there was no one not even a pastor because there was no structured way of dealing with such grievances in the church.”* As stated further by participant 20, *“the church should emphasize more on the family because when you look at the teachings in the church it is more on the salvation because CITAM does not preach prosperity but on the family issues it is somehow neglected.”*

Enhance premarital counseling

Some of the participants 8 out of the 25 felt like the church needs to do more during the premarital counseling, as this is the starting point for marriage and if conducted with prudence it will lead to a successful marriage and if not, this will contribute to divorce in marriages.

According to informant 014, *“The role of the church is to prepare people for marriage and family because when people are not for marriage and family, what happens most times is that they get into marriage when they are not prepared and families end up struggling because of the poor foundation because they do not know anything that is going to happen in that marriage. So, the role of the church is it to prepare people for marriage.”*

Participant 004 also indicated that the church needs to employ or engage professional councilors especially at CITAM valley road. *“Well, thinking about divorce, I was traumatized. The first place I went to was CITAM Valley Road and I wanted to see the senior pastor to explain my problem because I had gone to a lawyer who told me I'm too broken down and I need some counseling probably in a church setting because the lawyer knew that I am born again Christian even before I think about divorce. When I went to church to see the senior pastor, the secretary told me that I can't see the senior pastor and she send me to someone who in my opinion was not a trained counselor and was not even married. She was a single lady and what she did was to immediately give me the name of the lawyer who handles divorces and that lawyer belongs to CITAM Valley road or CITAM church and that lawyer quickly even before we talked for 30 minutes, he set out to take my case to court for proceedings. We went to court and we started the proceedings. So the church at that time would have helped me but it didn't it actually it took me off to the deep end to go to the divorce because if I was sent to someone who was a counselor and that person send me to a lawyer to process the divorce that was basically to say that the church gave me permission to go do the divorce. No one counselled me and no one helped me.”*

According to participant 003, *“the church should be more real during the pre-marital session, face issues in a more practical way. For example, the issue of compatibility. Just because both of you have the same level of education does not mean you are compatible. Let's be real. As much as I believe that marriage is a mystery, nobody can tell if a marriage would work or not, some more practical things happen. Let's say the church in general because where I was counseled from, people would take for granted that marriage has to work. People should take marriage more seriously not casually. You just get married, you know it will work, and you don't take people through rigorous counseling and soul searching to make sure they know what they are doing. Talk about everything deeply and that can be a good role that the church can play”.*

Church provides adequate support

The response of 2 participants out of the 25 participants was contrary as they felt that the church is already doing enough when it comes to the sustainability of marriages. According to participant 001, *“one thing I appreciate about CITAM, they honor the family and even this Safari group, discipleship, all comes down to discipling your family. It is very important to start with your family.”* Participant 025 indicated that *“Most times people are not prepared by the church, most times there are no people to prepare them. Our family setting nowadays does not prepare people for marriage. Those days of our parents and other people used to be prepared by the society for family. But in our day it doesn't happen. So the church should take*

that up because that is where people meet and therefore people should be prepared as Christian before they get to marriage institutions.”

Needs personal initiatives

The response of 1 participant out of the 25 participants indicated that the church has got no role to play, the success of a marriage depends on the need for personal initiatives of both the partners. According to participant 021, *“the success of a marriage lies mainly on the partners in a marriage and even if the church can do its level best, the individuals in a marriage relationship should take up a personal responsibility to work for their marriages.”*

To what extent does divorce contribute to the psychological problems of divorced spouses and children?

When the researcher sort to establish the extent to which divorce contributes to the psychological problems to the divorced spouse and children, the responses were as indicated in figure 11 below.

Distribution of codes (Frequency)

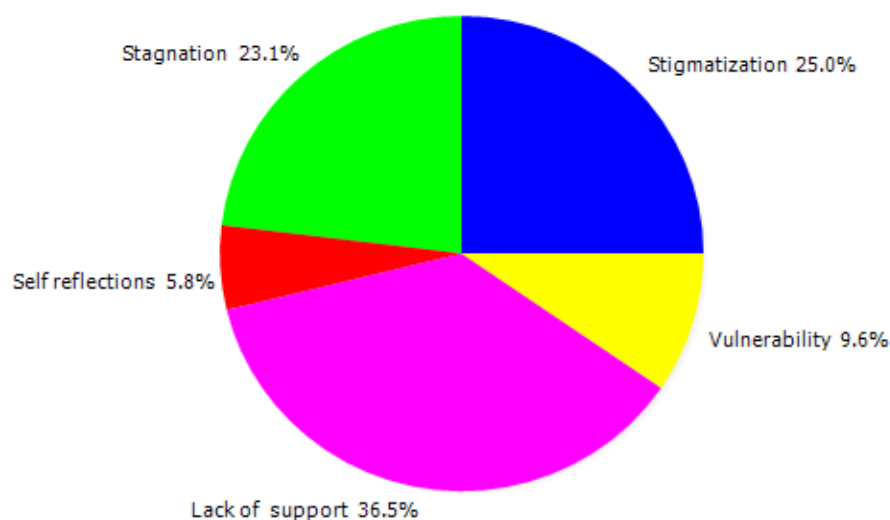


Figure 5: Psychological problems to divorced spouses and children

The responses to the psychological problem to the divorced spouses and their children. The researcher was able to identify five themes that emerged: lack of support, stigmatization, stagnation, vulnerability, and self-reflection.

Lack of support

The psychological problem that emerged most stated by 9 participants out of the 25 participants was lack of support. As marriage is a partnership between husband and wife, if a marriage is blessed with children, it calls for even them to work together. Therefore, the absence of either of the partners brings a gap and hence the lack of support. As stated by participant 012, “*Like in my position you see when I had an accident, I am left just helpless and I am left with a child so you find that attending to all this has been very challenging.*”

Stigmatization

The researcher was able to establish that 6 participants out of the 25 participants felt the Psychological problem they are facing is the stigmatization from the friends’ colleagues, Christians, and even the church which does not trust them with even the leadership position. Participant 011 stated “*Stigma from the community especially by the virtue of being a minister. It takes a toll on one emotionally.*”

Stagnation

The psychological problem affecting 5 participants out of the 25 participants was stagnation in terms of development, as the saying goes two are better than one because they can pull the resources together and at the end of it be able to achieve bigger things. When one leaves the remaining partner stagnates in terms of development and progress. According to participant 19, “*It slows down progress because your life almost comes to a standstill as you try to adjust to the new situation.*”

Vulnerability

Further, the researcher was able to establish another psychological problem according to 3 participants out of the 25 participants. The vulnerability they face is from some church members who take advantage of their status. As stated by participant 18, “*We are vulnerable because we are exposed to compromising situations especially because we are not allowed to re-marry.*”

Self-reflections

Two participants felt differently and cited that they did not have a psychological problem but instead they feel that it has been a time of self-reflection, which has been an advantage to their lives. According to participant 001, “*I think it depends on an individual, for I am grateful that I did separate because it has given me time to think about myself to weigh options to make better decisions*

Other Effects of Divorce in the Church (Christ is the Answer Ministries).

In many cases, the congregation sees the church as a place of solace and encouragement when facing issues in marriage. However, when things become thick and couples divorce or separate, the following happen from the data collected.

a) Children are affected

Children most of the times never understand the reasons for divorce in many live without knowledge of what exactly happened between their parents. Most of the correspondents indicated that their children are affected psychologically, and some cannot even concentrate at school. Lack of proper parenting also affects them since only one parent taking care of them

and most of them end up in disciplined and unruly. This causes a big problem for the church today because many churches have youths who are much undisciplined.

b) *Many couples end up backsliding*

Because of the shame that the couples face, many of them walk out of the church never to come again. Many of them become bitter with the church because they feel they do not understand their needs and reasons why they separated. The couples together with their children backslide and find other ways of giving them hope like visiting witchdoctors and diviners and others end up drinking to try to handle stress. The church is directly affected when people backslide because they are blamed for not fulfilling its mandate of helping people spiritually and their numbers also go down daily.

c) *The stigma:*

Society has a way of discriminating against the divorced and this leaves them negatively affected because they no longer have people or friends to speak to. After all, their status has changed, and they are seen as failures. They divorced most of the time avoid social gatherings including churches and resolve to stay alone in their homes. This affects them a lot and some develop low self-esteem and others develop depression, but others simply commit suicide and die.

d) *Bitterness.*

Bitterness in which many have unsolved issues with their spouses, they become very bitter in life. Everything affects them and they become overly sensitive on what everyone around says and does. A bitter church is a hard church to lead and therefore pastors struggle to help the congregation without knowing that the root cause of their issues is from their marriages. This affects the affected individual's social interactions and affects the effectiveness of the church since people cannot relate well because they are bitter.

e) *Financial difficulties*

When couples separate, many of them close their joint business in anger, and some who were depending on their spouses for support become helpless. Many couples who responded indicated that stabilizing again financially took a lot of time. Some who officially divorced in courts indicated that the process was tedious and very expensive. Many of them were left with no cash at all and some were to sell their properties to pay for legal fees and court penalties. When congregants are struggling financially the church struggles because it depends on offerings and tithes to survive and pay its bills.

Advice from respondents to those thinking of divorce

All couples that I interviewed strongly advised against divorce. They indicated that having tested the effects of divorce, they feel couples should try to work out their issues while staying together. They all agreed that divorce was not an option for them, but they just acted in anger and found themselves in a place they do not admire.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the church is not doing enough in terms of enhancing support for marriages that are struggling and they are headed for a divorce. This is because there is a lack of support from the church and that was cited as the cause of the rise of divorce cases in CITAM. The church is not doing much to offer quality premarital counseling as the approaches used do not deter

couples who are almost divorced from actually divorcing. Many of the participants indicated that the church might need come up good quality materials for premarital counselling that will help couples. And some felt that it is not about what the church is doing but it's about personal initiatives and it does have to do with what the church needs to do. In the long run the church is affected because when members of the church are hurting, the stability of the church is affected negatively.

As days goes by, many causes of divorce come up and therefore the church needs to be more sensitive and deliberate in handling marital issues. The church should walk with couples experiencing difficulties in their marriages and counsel those who are divorced or separated. Since from the study we realize that variance in expectation is one of the major causes of divorce, let the church be real on how they prepare couples for marriages clearly indicating the likely advantages and challenge.

Recommendations

- a) The church needs to diversify means in which its members are empowered on how to embrace God's teaching much more than their tradition or culture so that it does not determine their day to day lives, to an extent of breaking the marital vows as the vows are more binding than the tradition. Every person comes from a particular culture and it might be hard to conclude that all cultural practices and beliefs are bad or affect marriages negatively. The church however might need to come up with programs that will help their members identify negative cultures that are likely to affect their marriages negatively thus leading to divorce.
- b) The church members are aware of the biblical teaching that discourages them from divorce, but they go ahead to divorce. Therefore, the church needs to diversify means in which Christian couples live according to God's word which is the pillar for every marriage.
- c) The church should also come up with seminars that help understand the effects of divorce and the implications of living against the word of God. The word of God in Malachi 1: 6 indicates that God hates divorce and therefore it is something that God does not embrace at all. Since many of the respondents acknowledge the fact that the Bible discourages divorce but still goes ahead to divorce, the church might need to engage professionals like psychologists and counselors to determine why this happens even though people know about it. More research can be done to also find out reasons why this happens despite the knowledge people have about the effects of divorce and the Biblical stand on the same.
- d) The church needs to improve its premarital counseling as this is the building block of marriage and more importantly improve and provide support for the existing marriages. This can be done by coming up with structures to support troubled marriages, preaching on how to cultivate the existing marriages and families, and also recognizing the existence of divorcees in the congregation and intentionally walking with them without pointing fingers at them.
- e) Divorcees should also be allowed to serve in church since some of them are gifted and have a passion for ministry.
- f) The church should also intentionally have professional counsellors who have experience in marital issues and who will not mislead those who come for help in the church. This is something that some respondents really suggested. The church should therefore engage professional counselors who are married and experienced in matters to do with marriage counselling.

g) The church needs to develop programs that can support the church members who find themselves in troubled marriages by coming up with counseling programs to be able to identify with the affected church members. The counsellors should be well trained and experienced to handle marital issues. Many of the participants requested that it makes more sense to have a married person help handle issues on marriage because they are experienced.

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