

Marriage Breakdown Among Young Couples in the Ghanaian Context

ABSTRACT

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Aims: The purpose of the study was to establish the reasons for marriage breakdown among young couples.

Approach and Design: The qualitative approach and case study design were adopted for the study.

Place and Duration of Study: The study was conducted at Bomso in the Oforikrom Municipality in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. It was conducted between August 2022 and May 2023.

Methodology: The purposive sampling technique was used to select twelve (12) participants for the study between the ages of 35 years and below as a criterion. Data was analysed using thematic analysis.

Findings: The analysis shows lack of respect, lack of responsibility, differences in decision-making, family interference, differences in values and beliefs, infidelity, and miscommunication were identified as reasons for the breakdown of marriages among young couples. Also, the findings show there are many implications of marriage breakdown among young couples including; financial burden, loneliness and emotional disturbance, additional responsibility for children, temptation to commit adultery, and uncertainty about the future.

Conclusion: In all, the most significant issue identified in the breakdown of marriages among young couples in Bomso was a lack of respect, followed by a lack of responsibility and differences in decision-making.

Keywords: Couples, Divorce, Marriage, Marriage Breakdown, Young Couples

1. INTRODUCTION

Families, in recent decades, have changed; one such change is the increasing rate of marriage breakdowns that lead to divorce. This rise in marriage breakdown rate has been predicted to disintegrate the family institution and the foundations of society itself. Akuamoah asserts that “the fundamental unit of all societies is the family, the family that is responsible for the care and upbringing of children since it is a cohesive unit that ideally provides economic, social, and psychological security to all its members.” [1]

“In light of the roles identified for the family to play, if marriages are being disrupted more often by breakdowns that lead to divorce, the family could then be said to be undergoing a very serious crisis and the most affected in the scenarios are children” [2]. The author further asserts that “findings over the past decades show that marriage breakdowns have become a common song among many communities worldwide.” Joam asserts that “today’s ageing inhabitants have not been exempted, with more and more couples aged 50 and older breaking marriages after many years of voluntary unions. Marriage breakdowns have been and continue to be a topic that holds high interest for research and scholarly writing” [2]. Despite similarities, Amato found that it has been difficult to determine the frequency of marriage dissolutions because of differences in reporting status from area to region [3]. According to Amato, the irregularities in marriage breakdowns by regions and individual countries, as well as informal marriage breakdowns, particularly in Africa, have made it difficult for

international researchers to accurately count the annual marriage breakdowns in the world in general and Africa in particular, as well as to estimate the official number of children affected by marriage breakdowns [3].

In Ghana, studies have elaborated on some factors that lead to marriage breakdown within the general population. These include non-submissiveness, third-party intrusion, inadequate love and affection, lack of commitment, lack of trust [4, 5], personality, differences in upbringing, and lack of communication [6], the absence of children, duration of marriage, and previous marital experience [7]. In the same vein, it is known in Ghana that the legal system is the appropriate way to dissolve a marriage that was established under customary law [8].

For the past three decades, marriage breakdown has increasingly affected several lives in Ghana. There is anecdotal evidence to indicate that several marriages are being dissolved through the legal system in Ghana [9]. According to the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA), there were 664 divorces out of over 1,647 registered marriages between 2006 and 2007 in Accra (the nation's capital) alone [10]. Startling statistics from the Greater Accra Head Office of Legal Aid Ghana indicate that, at least, 40% of marriages registered annually in the region break up within 14 months [11]. The 2021 Population and Housing Census (PHC) report has revealed that 553,065 persons in Ghana have had their marriages dissolved while 405,090 have separated.

Therefore, the purpose of the study was to explore the reasons for the marriage breakdown among young couples in Bomso in the Oforikrom Municipality in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The study was guided by this research question - What are the reasons for marriage breakdown in young couples in Bomso in the Oforikrom Municipality? The study was limited to the Bomso in the Oforikrom Municipality. It is also limited to the reasons for marriage breakdown among young couples in the twenty-first century.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

2.1 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is a structure that can hold or support a theory of a research study. According to Abend, the theoretical framework introduces and describes the theory that explains why the research problem under study exists [12]. Researchers, therefore, use theories to guide them in their studies to observe and generate new ideas. In providing a theoretical framework to underpin a study, researchers therefore fall on theories. In this study depending upon the nature of breakdown, theories have been developed as 'Fault Theory' and 'No Fault Theory'.

2.1.1 Fault Theory

The Fault Theory of marriage, also known as the traditional matrimonial law doctrine of marital breakdown, is a legal concept that holds that a spouse must prove that the other spouse was at fault to obtain a divorce. This doctrine was widely used in Western countries until the mid-twentieth century. No one individual can be credited with propounding the Fault Theory of marriage. Rather, it was a widely accepted legal concept that developed over centuries in Western societies [13].

In the Fault Theory of marriage breakdown, one of the spouses requests the court that marriage breakdown be granted based on some fault of the other spouse. It is necessary to have a guilty party and an innocent party and only an innocent party can seek the remedy of marriage breakdown. If either of the parties is guilty of committing a matrimonial offence, the aggrieved party alone is entitled to marriage breakdown. When both spouses seek a marriage breakdown on the ground of fault of the other and both can prove that the other spouse is at fault, the Court decides which one is least at fault [14].

The Fault Theory of marriage is relevant to the study of the implications of marriage breakdown among young couples in Bomso in the Oforikrom Municipality because it provides a historical context for understanding how divorce has been legally conceptualized and regulated in Western societies. While the Fault Theory is no longer widely used in most Western countries, it may still influence cultural attitudes toward divorce and marital conflict. By understanding the history of the Fault Theory, researchers can better understand how divorce is perceived and experienced by young couples in Bomso.

The theory could be applied to explore the extent to which young couples in Bomso adhere to fault-based marriage breakdown. For example, researchers could examine whether young couples tend to assign blame for the breakdown of their marriages, and if so, whether they think they see themselves as the innocent or guilty party. By exploring these issues, researchers could gain insight into the psychological and emotional dynamics of divorce among young couples in Bomso, and how they navigate the process of ending their marriages. Additionally, the theory could be used to compare

the experiences of young couples in Bomso with those of couples in other cultures or historical periods that have used the Fault Theory of marriage. This could help to shed light on how cultural and legal norms shape people's experiences of divorce and the dissolution of marriage.

2.1.2 No-Fault Theory

The No-Fault divorce, which allows a couple to obtain a divorce without proving that either spouse is at fault, was developed and implemented in various forms in different countries over several decades. In the United States, California was the first State to pass a no-fault divorce law in 1969, and this was followed by other states in subsequent years. However, the concept was not developed by any one individual. Rather, it emerged from a combination of social, cultural, and political factors [13]. The No-Fault Theory of marriage breakdown “is based on the fact that marriages may fail not because of the fault or guilt of one of the spouses but because the spouses are not compatible in their temperament” [15].

The No-Fault Theory of marriage breakdown is relevant to the study of the implications of marriage breakdown among young couples in Bomso in the Oforikrom Municipality because it provides an alternative legal framework for understanding how divorce can be conceptualized and regulated. While the No-Fault Theory is not widely used in many parts of the world, it may be relevant to the experiences of young couples in Bomso who may face cultural and legal barriers to divorce. By understanding the principles of the No-Fault Theory, researchers can explore whether young couples in Bomso can obtain divorces in a way that is fair and equitable and whether they can navigate the legal system with relative ease.

The theory could be applied in the study by examining the extent to which young couples in Bomso can obtain a divorce without proving fault or guilt. For example, researchers could explore whether young couples can obtain divorces based on mutual consent, or whether they face barriers to obtaining divorces due to cultural or legal norms that prioritize the preservation of marriage. By examining these issues, researchers could gain insight into how the legal system shapes people's experiences of divorce and the dissolution of marriage.

2.2 Context of Marriage Breakdown in Ghana

According to Dankwa et al. (2022), “population is the foundation of all social structures. This is largely facilitated by the institution called marriage” (p, 18) [16]. “The institution of marriage is at the centre of Ghanaian society” [17]. This well-established institution is acknowledged as the foundation of all social life in Ghana [17]. During the pre-colonial era, the age of marriage was based on biological development and certain customary requirements. Among girls, physical maturity and the performance of puberty rites were the main consideration. For boys, the main factor considered was social maturity which was indicated by the attainment of certain positions as determined by the society [17]. Marriage has several benefits to society. For example, marriage is seen as a legitimate source of procreation and populating communities for social interaction and cohesion. With this notwithstanding, marriage may be bedevilled with challenges that can lead to breakdown.

For the past three decades, marriage breakdown has increasingly affected several lives in Ghana. According to the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA), “there were 664 divorces out of over 1,647 registered marriages between 2006 and 2007 in Accra (the nation’s capital) alone.” [10]. Astounding statistics from the Greater Accra Head Office of Legal Aid Ghana also indicate that “at least, 40% of marriages registered annually in the Greater Accra region break up within 14 months” [11]. In the words of Ambert (2009), “Divorce is the final termination of a marital union, cancelling the legal duties and responsibilities of marriage and dissolving the bonds of matrimony between the parties involved” [18]. Usually, it is one of three ways of ending a marriage that has broken down. The other two ways are annulment and legal separation [19]. A breakdown of marriage always precedes a breakup of the marriage. In other words, before a breakup in the marriage, there must be a breakdown of the relationship (Seneadza, 2010. According to Sasse:

“Before the final stage of divorce, the couple’s relationship goes through three general stages. In the first stage of isolation, the couples become separated from each other as intimacy behaviour breaks down, although they might still converse and be polite to each other. In the second stage of invalidation, the couples begin to negatively assess each other’s worth and belittle one another, which gives rise to accusations. In the third stage of betrayal, trust is broken down and there is no support from each other” [19].

Beneath the core debate of the changing nature of family life in countries such as the United States is the phenomenon of marriage breakdown [20]. Ideologies are floating from sociological to demographic and psychological concerning the risk factors for marriage breakdown.

Marriage breakdown calls for the development of new roles and relationship patterns as well as an integration of various emotional events. The experience of marriage breakdown thus involves dramatic change. As a complex transition that affects the lives of individuals, children, and family members at large, marriage breakdown from an African perspective is seen as shameful; divorced men often feel uncomfortable in the company of other men [21]. The author further stressed that, as a stigmatized experience, marriage breakdown is portrayed as a negative consequence of flawed individuals who fail to sustain long commitments. There are indications that marriage breakdown rates have the potential to become a public health problem in Ghana [22]. However, there is a paucity of research in this area. We are, therefore, fairly uninformed about the factors influencing marriage breakdown in the country.

2.3 Reasons for Marriage Breakdown Among Young Couples

According to Olson and Disfrain, a family can be defined as two or more people who are committed to each other and who share intimacy, resources, decision-making responsibilities, and values. However, everything that happens to any family member has an impact on everyone else in the family because members are interconnected and marriage breakdown is one of the major troubles that affect the family system. Multiple, interlocking factors have contributed to the rapid rise of marriage breakdown worldwide) [23]. For instance, marriage breakdown in Canada and other western countries in the second half of the 20th century are part of this and the same factors have contributed to the maintenance of relatively high rates of marriage breakdown and increasing rates of cohabitation into the 21st century. For example, a study conducted in the USA showed that infidelity emerged as the most commonly reported cause of marriage breakdown [24]. It is commonly said that there is no smoke without fire. It has been established in the literature that infidelity, lack of communication, mistrust, spousal violence, intellectual incompatibility, and early marriage are the causes of marriage breakdown. In the views of Azumah et al, "multiple and interlocking factors have contributed to the rapid rise of marriage breakdown in Ghana and other developing countries" (p. 152) [25].

There is no single and simple answer to the question of "Why marriages do not survive better or worse"? and the reasons for marriage breakdown vary from one couple to another. In an extensive review of factors that account for marriage breakdown around the world, Lowenstein identifies innumerable reasons to include "women's independence; marrying too early and arranged marriages; economic factors; poor intellectual, educational, and social skills; liberal divorce laws; sexual factors leading to incompatibility; role conflicts; alcoholism and substance abuse or risk-taking behaviour; differences between the partners leading to acrimony; religious factors; and attitudes toward divorce" [26]. There are many other reasons. The list has not been exhausted. Amato and Previti indicate that inequality, incompatibility, drinking or drug use, and growing apart were some other reported whys and wherefores for marriage breakdown) [24]. Specific demographics have been associated with marriage breakdown. For example, Sasse asserts that "the younger the couples are, the more likely they are to divorce. Low income can also be a factor, as unemployed couples are often not able to endure the financial responsibilities of marriage. Additionally, those with a background of marriage breakdown often end up divorcing" [19].

2.3.1 Religious reasons

Several activities in religion are anticipated to give solidity to the institution of marriage in every society but sometimes, the contrary becomes the reality. Religion sometimes can cause marriage breakdown. Writing on Social Problems and Religion, Okon points out that "religion which ought to be a pillar of the society sometimes becomes caterpillar wherewith the society is destroyed" (p. 230) [27]. This can be seen in the role religion plays in the issue of marriage breakdown. A change of denomination or religion by a partner may cause instability in the family which may result in marriage breakdown. In this way, one of the causes of marriage breakdown can be religion.

According to Fatima and Ajmal [28], "a religious sect plays an important role in a happy marriage. If the belief systems of two people are different, there would be conflicts between them. A clash of beliefs has a negative influence on children. These confusions and misunderstandings may also lead to serious clashes between the whole family and even separation or divorce between the couple." A study conducted by Vaaler et al, indicates that, "the risk of marriage breakdown to be elevated if husbands were more religious and wives were more conservative. The risk of divorce was found to be lower if both partners belonged to the same sect showing how similar sects impact the duration of marriage and how it keeps the relationship intact" [29]. Curtis and Ellison's research findings added that, "husband's religiosity is inversely related to the frequency of disputes and disagreements over housework, money, and how time is spent. Sectarian dissimilarities among partners were also positively associated with the frequency of conflicts" [30]. These findings from diverse settings indicate how aspects of religious beliefs can lead to the breakdown of marriages.

2.3.2 Economic reasons

Economic reasons seem to be one of the major causes of marriage breakdowns. "The American Journal of Sociology published a study which found out that a husband's unemployment can be a key factor behind divorce" [31]. Difficulties in accessing and utilizing money can every so often cause marital glitches to lead to the filing of a divorce. According to Eyo, "a married couple facing financial difficulties is often under a lot of stress, which in turn can lead to constant arguing and lack of communication. Couples who don't see eye to eye on spending habits or couples where one spouse has and controls the finances of the home can face marital strain that can culminate in marriage breakdown" [32]. The author further asserts that "Unemployment not only has the effect of causing financial hardship but also lowers self-esteem, creates isolation, and limits the ability of families to lead fulfilling lives in the community." In addition, "at the other end of the spectrum, other families, due to financial pressures and fear of losing employment, are working longer hours with a consequent reduction in time for family. This, in turn, places additional stress and pressure on family life" [32].

The difficulties that couples face in dealing with social pressures, according to Gjelten, "exacerbate relationship problems. Work practices that are 'family unfriendly' can reduce the ability of couples to resolve differences. The pace of change, combined with high levels of uncertainty about the future of jobs, etc. can be very destabilising" [33]. Sometimes, it is a matter of disagreement over monetary issues. "Disagreements about finances make matters dicey, especially when it gets in the way of working together as a team. Some might think their partner spends too much, others might be worried about their partner's debt and, in some cases, couples cannot compromise about what to spend their money on. Over time, the strain gets to be too much" [34].

2.3.3 Age at first marriage

Enang contends that "a factor that can cause marriage breakdown is the age at first marriage. Those who marry for the first time in their teens are prone to marriage breakdown because the partners are usually less mature intellectually, emotionally, and experientially – in their teenage years than when older, and thus are probably less likely to make sound marital choices" [35]. It is therefore suggested that marriage partners who are too young to marry may be prone to making mistakes in critical decision-making in life concerning issues like -who to marry and spend the rest of their life with, which ultimately can often lead to marriage breakdown when the couples were rushed into the institution of marriage. Enang, succinctly put it this way. "In Africa particularly, teenage marriage is common among the lower class, especially the illiterate, and "so is the divorce rate due to financial pressure, lower job status, low educational level and more pre-marital pregnancy" [35].

2.3.4 Domestic violence

Domestic violence is one of the areas that can necessitate divorce. The concept of domestic violence is defined as the "abuse by one partner against the other in a marriage or other intimate relationship. Pushing, shoving, hitting, sexual assault, and other forms of physical attack are all forms of domestic abuse; so are stalking, intimidation, isolating a partner from others, withholding money, and emotional abuse of all kinds" [33]. Domestic and gender violence account for some of the marriage breakdown cases. In situations "where violence is meted out on the woman in marriage by either the spouse or in-laws, it may lead to marriage breakdown, especially in this age of gender equality and equity" (p. 131) [32]. Domestic violence normally takes the scope of either perpetuated through physical, sexual, verbal, economic, and emotional trends. The perpetrators can be in any of the genders, but mostly the males are the perpetrators while the females are seen as the victims.

2.3.5 Sexual incompatibility and extramarital affairs

Ukpong opines that "incompatibility in sexual matters or unwillingness of a spouse to perform the sexual act for a long period" (p. 190) [36]. This may lead to the other spouse filing for and obtaining a marriage breakdown. Such a practice is often raised in the court of law as a 'denial of conjugal rights.' Sexual satisfaction in marriage is seen as a vital part that has to be strictly adhered to by both couples. Because it is believed that is among the most imperative considerations that facilitate life in an all-purpose manner and an actual warm welcome married life in our society. "If one of the spouses, either husband or wife, is not satisfied then he/she will not be able to be happy and enjoy life. A dissatisfied person always remains restless and jealous of other people. He/she is always trying to get more and more and is never thankful for whatever he/she has in his/her life" [28]. Unsatisfied spouses may have an extra-marital affair and may face very serious consequences like marriage breakdown so; marital satisfaction can lead to happiness and contentment which can result in being happily married.

Extramarital sexual affair is "mainly on the part of the wife. Africa which is polygamous does not often frown on husbands having extramarital sexual affairs, but when it involves a wife, it is always treated with disdain and can lead to marriage breakdown" [32]. It is therefore presumed that infidelity raises its ugly head in relationships when one partner cannot offer what another person desires so much as a dignified being. On this note, infidelity which often begins in a seemingly fresh

and innocent friendship as a starter can lead to a real marriage breakdown. In the views of Warren, infidelity “starts as an emotional affair which later becomes a physical affair. Infidelity is one of the primary reasons for marriage breakdown. It is also one of the legal divorce reasons, besides living apart for more than a year and subjecting the partner to cruelty (mental or physical)” [37].

2.3.6 Medical reasons

Health reasons also contribute to marriage breakdown. The research found that “in satisfied marriages, wives' and husbands' health was equivalent whereas, in dissatisfied marriages, wives reported more mental and physical health problems than their husbands” [38]. This indicates that good health matters in marriage and its sustainability. That is why “health matters such as impotency with a resultant childlessness, on the wife or husband, protracted illness, insanity, HIV/AIDS, etc. may lead to marriage breakdown. Infertility in particular, coupled with societal pressure can lead to marriage breakdown” [32].

2.3.7 Addiction

Addiction has become a canker to marriage breakdown in our contemporary societies. Among the major trends for addiction, people mostly can be addicted to uncalled-for behaviours, abuse substances, or even to other people. “Addicts often exhibit behaviour that is unacceptable in a marriage, that is lying, stealing, and betrayal of marital trust, and consequently addiction makes the list of top reasons why couples divorce.” [31]. This clearly shows that, whether it's gambling, drugs, or alcohol abuse, addiction can derail once purposeful marriage life. As a person's addiction gains more control, they often find themselves in peril of losing employment, friends, and their marriage.

2.3.8 Change in status

In research of a behavioural pattern of people and social problems, it was deduced that “change of status sometimes affects the lifestyle of some people. “A little uplifting may bring new friends, social status and consequently the new way of life” [39]. In some situations, “a spouse who fails to meet the new standard of life may be divorced to enable the person to marry a new spouse to fit into the new status. The same may also be applicable when a person drops in societal status. His/her spouse may desire divorce because of shame” [32].

2.3.9 Lack of understanding

Understanding one's spousal needs may help a relationship to grow. Knowing and accepting the weaknesses and strengths of one's partner has been seen as one of the imperative catalytical growth of marriages, while the opposite will derail gains made in marriage. Research indicates that “for wives, the understanding of their husbands was the strongest predictor of their marriage” [40]. Effective communication is key to a healthy relationship. Talking to each other about feelings, desires, problems, and expectations in a relationship may solve many issues that can lead to divorce. It is on this grounds that Apalara posits that “most partners unknowingly tread and disrespect their spouse's constructs, norms, and culture, which causes significant friction between them. The most bizarre thing is that even the spouse that is hurt cannot articulate or put into words why they are hurting because these are unspoken rules or ideals that they hold and do not realise until someone breaks that rule” [41].

2.3.10 Spouse temperament

Spouse temperament is another factor that plays an important part in marital relationships. “If both spouses are aggressive and short-tempered, more fights are likely to happen and the effect on the relationship would be unpleasant. At least, one of the partners should have a calm demeanour so that during a fight he/she can prevent anything rash from happening” [28]. A study also showed that “participants with more pleasant temperaments and those who have partners with more pleasant temperaments were happier in their marriages. However, unpleasant wives were highly dissatisfied with their marriage” [42]. Thus, for married couples to have well established union, there must be understanding of each other, financial support, absence of infidelity, and abuse whether emotional or physical.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted from the lens of the interpretivism paradigm. Since the interpretive paradigm pertains to the understanding of the world as it is from individuals' subjective experiences it became useful to adopt it for the study. This study adopted the qualitative approach. According to Cropley, the task of qualitative research is to gain insights into constructions of reality, that is to tease out the nature of the world as it is experienced, structured, and interpreted by

people in the course of their everyday lives [43]. In this study, a qualitative approach was used to enable the researchers to get direct explanations and views of the participants. Since the qualitative approach allows asking questions that come in textual form to understand human experience, it was necessary to employ this approach for the study. Research design, according to Cooper and Schindler, refers to simply as “the plan and structure of investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to research questions” (p. 134) [44]. A case study design was employed in this study because since the design explores a phenomenon in its natural setting holistically, it was necessary to employ it to unearth the issue of marriage breakdown among young couples.

Since the population of a study means the total group of people out of which researchers have an interest, the targeted population for the study constituted all young couples who experienced marriage breakdown in Bomso at the time of the study. Kwabia describes a good sample as one that is representative of the population from which it was selected [45]. Sample size determination for qualitative research has varied approaches. However, some scholars on the determination of appropriate sample size for qualitative study have proposed varied approaches. For example, Glaser and Strauss “propose the concept of saturation as very relevant in determining sample size for qualitative study. Saturation here implies a situation where data obtained from any additional respondent or sample will not provide any new information to what has already been obtained from research participant.” [46]. To this end, it was prudent that the researchers used an appropriate sample size. The researchers sampled 12 couples in Bomso in the Oforikrom Municipality. For this particular study, the researcher adopted a purposive sampling technique in selecting respondents. Since purposive sampling is a kind of sampling that deals with drawing the sample from the part of the population, which is close to hand, in other words, available and convenient it was suitable for the study.

The main instrument for data collection was the interview guide. The kind of interview done on the field was the face-to-face interview. With the procedure for data collection through interviews, the researchers first made a familiarization visit to participants. This method helped the researchers to establish a warm atmosphere between the participants thereby facilitating smooth and trustworthy data collection. After the familiarization visit with participants, a scheduled date for data collection with each participant was done. During the day of data collection, each participant was briefed about the purpose of the research. Thereafter, permission was sought for recording for transcribing data.

Data from this study was analysed using thematic analysis whereby themes emerged from the collection developed. Thematic analysis is used to analyse, classify, and present themes (patterns) that relate to the data. “It illustrates the data in great detail and deals with diverse subjects via interpretations” [47]. The analysis involved the process of listening, reading, re-reading, inductive reasoning, reflection, and coding the interview transcripts and drawing out major themes from the data collected on reasons for divorce among young couples.

Ethically, matters are important in carrying out research work. In this study, the researcher considered all research directives, which included maintaining confidentiality, honesty, openness, and responsibility, as well as seeking permission from the required offices and officers adhered to by the researchers. Also, personal information gathered from participants in the study was erased. In addition, when audio recordings were collected from the persons questioned, the audio files were kept on laptops as password-protected files, preventing outsiders from reading or editing the transcribed data. Furthermore, pseudonyms were used in the study to safeguard the anonymity of participants. To avoid plagiarism, secondary information from books, journals, newspapers, and online theses that supplied significant literature on the topic was properly credited.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section has two sub-sections that present the findings and discussion of the demographic characteristics of participants for the study and the reasons for the breakdown of marriage in the study area.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Participants

This sub-section presents the background information of the respondents. This comprised data on the sex, age, and occupation of the respondents and number of years married before marriage breakdown. Twelve participants were involved in the study. There were 9 males and 3 females involved in the study. The ages of the participants ranged from 22 to 33 years. The average number of years they were married before the breakdown of their marriage was 4 years. The participants involved in the study were teachers (majority), traders, caterers, nurses, and shop attendants. The background information of the participants in the study provides insight into the demographic characteristics of the participants and can help to understand the context in which the participants experienced marriage breakdown. For example, the fact that they came from different occupations indicates a diversity of experiences and perspectives. Additionally, the fact that the participants were mainly in their 20s and early 30s suggests that they were relatively young when they experienced marriage breakdown. The findings resonate with Enang who found that those who marry for the

first time in their teens are prone to marriage breakdown because the partners are usually less mature - intellectually, emotionally, and experientially - in their teenage years than when older, and thus are probably less likely to make sound marital choices [35].

4.2 Reasons for Marriage Breakdown Among Young Couples

This section is guided by research question one. That is; what are the reasons for marriage breakdown among young couples in Bomso in the Oforikrom Municipality? Interviews with respondents indicate that there are numerous reasons for the breakdown in their marriage though they were young. Broadly, these reasons can be said to be the fault of both partners. The themes that emerged from the analysis include lack of respect, lack of responsibility, differences in decision-making, family interference, differences in values and beliefs, infidelity, and miscommunication. Below are the major themes.

4.2.1 Lack of respect

One of the main points that emerged as the reason for marriage breakdown was lack of respect. Many participants mentioned that their partners lacked respect for them and that this was a major contributor to the breakdown of their marriage. Some participants explained this by noting that:

Our marriage broke down because he had been insulting me. He insulted me publicly without considering my feelings (P. 1).

He lacks respect for me. With respect issue, I wouldn't overlook it because that tarnishes my image before my colleagues. Is that something worthy for a husband to do? No. (P. 2).

My wife did not respect me and you know men love and cherish a woman who is very submissive and respectful. Before we married, she had listening ears and was very respectful, but one year down the line, she behaved very aggressively (P. 3).

The data suggests that lack of respect is a key factor contributing to the breakdown of marriages among young couples in the study area. The participants explained that when their partner stopped showing respect for them, it became difficult for them to maintain the relationship. They mentioned that their partners would insult them publicly, behave aggressively, or be disrespectful towards them. Additionally, one participant noted that;

the lack of respect made them feel embarrassed in front of their colleagues, further straining the relationship.

This data highlights the importance of mutual respect in maintaining a healthy and stable marriage. The findings support the study by Turley who found that couples who reported low levels of respect were more likely to experience relationship dissatisfaction [48].

4.2.2 Lack of responsibility

A second theme that emerged during the data analysis was a lack of responsibility. Some participants mentioned that their partners were not responsible and failed to meet their obligations to the family, such as providing for the children. Some participants illustrated:

He doesn't cater to his child by making sure the child is well fed, feeding, clothing, shelter, all these things were absent. So, what makes such a person a responsible man? (P. 6).

My partner used to shirk her responsibility. It becomes very disturbing because you have children who need to survive (P. 4).

The participants mentioned that their partners were not fulfilling their responsibilities, such as caring for the children and providing for their basic needs like food, clothing, and shelter. This lack of responsibility is seen as a reason for the breakdown of the marriage and is considered unacceptable. This highlights the importance of both partners being committed and responsible in marriage to ensure its stability and success. The study confirms Price who found that a lack of responsibility in one or both partners can negatively impact marital satisfaction. The study showed that when one partner fails to take responsibility for their actions, it can lead to feelings of resentment and frustration, which can ultimately lead to a breakdown in the marriage [49].

4.2.3 Differences in decision-making

A third theme that emerged during the data analysis was differences in decision-making. Participants mentioned that their partners did not consult them when making decisions or involved their families too much in their decisions. Some participants shared:

Another problem is when it comes to making decisions, he did things without consulting me. When it's time to make decisions about the child, he does not consult me. When you tell him something, he only says "I have heard you". But then "I have heard you" means you will not hear anything from him again. (P. 12).

My wife involved his family a lot in our decisions. How can she discuss everything with your mum? When we discussed this, she went to consult her mum. Is that not immaturity? Must your mum always dictate what we should do as husband and wife? Then when I make decisions and act on them without her knowledge, she becomes angry. We are more together because it generated some fights between us (P. 8).

The participants in this study seem to have experienced difficulties with decision-making in their relationships. Some participants felt that their partners made decisions without consulting them, which led to a lack of communication and understanding in the relationship. On the other hand, some participants felt that their partners relied too heavily on their families in decision-making, leading to conflicts and disagreements between partners. Overall, this lack of clear communication and collaboration in decision-making appears to be a major source of tension in these relationships. The finding is in line with Levine who found that differences in decision-making styles can contribute to marital dissatisfaction. The study showed that when partners have different approaches to making decisions, it can lead to disagreements and conflicts, which can undermine the trust and respect in the relationship [50].

4.2.4 Family interference

A fourth theme that emerged during the data analysis was family interference. Some participants mentioned that their partners' families interfered in their marriage, causing conflicts and contributing to the breakdown of their marriage. Some participants indicated:

The man depends so much on his family for advice ignoring my own. His mother and sisters to the extent that I had become like a nuisance to them. And you know if you don't have good relations with your in-laws, your marriage may break down. That's exactly my case (P. 9).

If my husband wanted to buy anything for me, he consulted his mother first. It came to a time that they saw that he bought things for me more than expected. So, I think envy is part of it. I feel so sad and regret every because my aunt advised me to further my education rather than marrying this early (P. 1).

The participants mentioned that the involvement of their partner's family in decision-making caused problems in their marriage. One participant mentioned that; her husband's dependence on his family for advice caused her to feel like a nuisance. The other participant mentioned that; her husband's consultation with his mother even for buying gifts for her made her feel sad and regretful about their marriage. Additionally, the involvement of the in-laws caused envy and contributed to the breakdown of their marriage. These experiences suggest that excessive interference from in-laws can create tension and negatively impact the decision-making process in a marriage. The study resonates with Nelson who found that family interference can have a significant impact on a couple's relationship [51]. The author found that when family members involve themselves in a couple's affairs, it can create conflict and tension, which can ultimately lead to a breakdown in the marriage.

4.2.5 Differences in values and beliefs

Another theme that emerged during the data analysis was differences in values and beliefs. Participants mentioned that differences in values and beliefs, such as religious beliefs, affected their marriage and contributed to its breakdown. It was illustrated:

I am a Christian but my partner is not. So there that certain times when we need to incorporate some principles or moral values in our marriage. I saw this affected marriage looking at how we don't agree on certain things as husband and wife (P. 1).

I got sick but since my husband is not a Christian he went and consulted his friends who told him that my problem was spiritual madness. Meanwhile, it's just a psychological problem I am having that needs peace of mind to overcome (P. 10).

These excerpts suggest that differences in values and beliefs can cause tension and miscommunication in a marriage. In one instance, the participant mentions that being a Christian while their partner is not has caused issues in the marriage when trying to incorporate certain principles or moral values. In another instance, the participants' partner's non-Christian beliefs caused misunderstandings when trying to address a health issue. These differences in values and beliefs can cause conflicts and misunderstandings, which can contribute to the breakdown of the marriage. This finding supports the result of Williams who found that differences in values and beliefs can cause tension and conflict in marriage [52]. The study showed that when partners hold different beliefs about important issues, it can lead to disagreements and a lack of understanding, which can ultimately contribute to a breakdown in the relationship.

4.2.6 Infidelity

In addition, extramarital affairs or infidelity emerged as a theme. Participants mentioned that infidelity was a major reason for the breakdown of their marriage, particularly when their partners bragged about cheating and did not consider their feelings. This was highlighted in particular statements that:

One of the reasons why our marriage is not in place anymore is the issue of cheating. He would cheat on me by letting me know that he even cheating. You say that African men are polygamous, but some do cheat by not letting their wives or persons get to know that they are cheating. If he does it without me knowing, that's fine. But he does it and brags with it. It was very annoying (P. 1).

He cheated on me making sure that I was aware of it without considering my feelings. If care is not taken, you can even slap him or do something else to him (P. 4).

The participants mentioned that cheating is another issue that led to the breakdown of their marriage. One person's partner would cheat and openly talk about it, causing pain and annoyance for the participant. Another person's partner would cheat but keep it a secret, which the participant was fine with. This shows that the open bragging about cheating and disregard for the participant's feelings was a source of the issue. The results are in line with Adams, who found that infidelity can have a devastating impact on a marriage. The study showed that infidelity can cause feelings of betrayal, anger, and hurt, which can undermine trust and respect in the relationship and ultimately lead to a breakdown in the marriage [53].

4.2.7 Miscommunication

Miscommunication emerged as a key reason for marriage breakdown among young couples. Participants mentioned that miscommunication and the failure to properly understand each other also contributed to the breakdown of their marriage.

If my husband wanted to buy anything for me, he consulted his mother first. It came to a time that they saw that he bought things for me more than expected. So, I think envy is part of it. I feel so sad and regret every because my aunt advised me to further my education rather than marrying this early (P. 1).

Another problem is when it comes to making decisions, he did things without consulting me, like. When it's time for making decisions about the child he does not consult me. When you tell him something, he only says I have heard you. But then "I have heard you" means you did not hear anything from him again (P. 12).

The participants highlighted that miscommunication and the inability to effectively communicate with each other were significant factors that led to the deterioration of their marital relationships. This lack of effective communication resulted in misunderstandings and ultimately contributed to the breakdown of the marriages. The findings confirm the study by James, who found that miscommunication can hurt marital satisfaction [54]. The study showed that when partners have difficulty communicating effectively, it can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts, which can ultimately contribute to a breakdown in the relationship.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Lack of respect, lack of responsibility, differences in decision-making, family interference, differences in values and beliefs, infidelity, and miscommunication were identified as contributing factors to the breakdown of marriages. Lack of

respect was noted as the most significant issue, with participants reporting that their partner lacked respect for them and this led to public insults and aggressive behaviour. Lack of responsibility was another key factor, with participants mentioning that their partners did not meet their obligations to the family, such as providing for the children. Differences in decision-making were also highlighted, with participants indicating that their partners made decisions without consulting them or relied too heavily on their families for advice. Family interference was noted as a problem, with participants indicating that their partner's family interfered in their marriage, leading to conflicts and contributing to the breakdown of their relationship. Mutual respect, responsibility, clear communication, collaboration in decision-making, and minimal family interference are crucial for the success and stability of a marriage. In all, the most significant issue identified in the breakdown of marriages among young couples in Bomso was a lack of respect, followed by a lack of responsibility and differences in decision-making.

To encourage open communication and conflict resolution skills, couples should be advised to develop open communication and conflict resolution skills to prevent misunderstandings and conflicts from escalating. Also, in addressing the emotional and financial implications of marriage breakdown, the Municipal authorities should develop programmes to support individuals going through the emotional and financial consequences of marriage breakdown, including financial assistance, emotional support, and counselling.

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