

Original Research Article

Factors that Contribute to Marriage Breakdown Among Young Couples in the Ghanaian Context

ABSTRACT

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Aims: The study aimed 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 it 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

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

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

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

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

49 **2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES**

50 **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

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

56 **2.1.1 Fault Theory**

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

62 In the Fault Theory of marriage breakdown, one of the spouses requests the court that marriage breakdown be granted
63 based on some fault of the other spouse. It is necessary to have a guilty party and an innocent party and only an innocent
64 party can seek the remedy of marriage breakdown. If either of the parties is guilty of committing a matrimonial offence, the
65 aggrieved party alone is entitled to marriage breakdown. When both spouses seek a marriage breakdown on the ground
66 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].

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

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

79 Fault Theory of marriage. This could help to shed light on how cultural and legal norms shape people's experiences of
80 divorce and the dissolution of marriage.

81 **2.1.2 No-Fault Theory**

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

88 **2.1.3 Relevance and Application of the Theories to the Study**

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

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

101 **2.2 Context of Marriage Breakdown in Ghana**

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

111 For the past three decades, marriage breakdown has increasingly affected several lives in Ghana. According to the Accra
112 Metropolitan Assembly (AMA), “there were 664 divorces out of over 1,647 registered marriages between 2006 and 2007
113 in Accra (the nation’s capital) alone.” [10]. Astounding statistics from the Greater Accra Head Office of Legal Aid Ghana
114 also indicate that “at least, 40% of marriages registered annually in the Greater Accra region break up within 14 months”
115 [11]. In the words of Ambert (2009), “Divorce is the final termination of a marital union, cancelling the legal duties and
116 responsibilities of marriage and dissolving the bonds of matrimony between the parties involved” [18]. Usually, it is one of
117 three ways of ending a marriage that has broken down. The other two ways are annulment and legal separation [19]. A
118 breakdown of marriage always precedes a breakup of the marriage. In other words, before a breakup in the marriage,
119 there must be a breakdown of the relationship (Seneadza, 2010. According to Sasse:

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

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

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

136 **2.3 Reasons for Marriage Breakdown Among Young Couples**

137 According to Olson and Disfrain, a family can be defined as two or more people who are committed to each other and
138 who share intimacy, resources, decision-making responsibilities, and values. However, everything that happens to any
139 family member has an impact on everyone else in the family because members are interconnected and marriage
140 breakdown is one of the major troubles that affect the family system. Multiple, interlocking factors have contributed to the
141 rapid rise of marriage breakdown worldwide) [23]. For instance, marriage breakdown in Canada and other western
142 countries in the second half of the 20th century are part of this and the same factors have contributed to the maintenance
143 of relatively high rates of marriage breakdown and increasing rates of cohabitation into the 21st century. For example, a
144 study conducted in the USA showed that infidelity emerged as the most commonly reported cause of marriage breakdown
145 [24]. It is commonly said that there is no smoke without fire. It has been established in the literature that infidelity, lack of
146 communication, mistrust, spousal violence, intellectual incompatibility, and early marriage are the causes of marriage
147 breakdown. In the views of Azumah et al, "multiple and interlocking factors have contributed to the rapid rise of marriage
148 breakdown in Ghana and other developing countries" (p. 152) [25].

149
150 There is no single and simple answer to the question of "Why marriages do not survive better or worse"? and the reasons
151 for marriage breakdown vary from one couple to another. In an extensive review of factors that account for marriage
152 breakdown around the world, Lowenstein identifies innumerable reasons to include "women's independence; marrying too
153 early and arranged marriages; economic factors; poor intellectual, educational, and social skills; liberal divorce laws;
154 sexual factors leading to incompatibility; role conflicts; alcoholism and substance abuse or risk-taking behaviour;
155 differences between the partners leading to acrimony; religious factors; and attitudes toward divorce" [26]. There are
156 many other reasons. The list has not been exhausted. Amato and Previti indicate that inequality, incompatibility, drinking
157 or drug use, and growing apart were some other reported whys and wherefores for marriage breakdown) [24]. Specific
158 demographics have been associated with marriage breakdown. For example, Sasse asserts that "the younger the couples
159 are, the more likely they are to divorce. Low income can also be a factor, as unemployed couples are often not able to
160 endure the financial responsibilities of marriage. Additionally, those with a background of marriage breakdown often end
161 up divorcing" [19].

162 **2.3.1 Religious reasons**

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

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

179 **2.3.2 Economic reasons**

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

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

197 **2.3.3 Age at first marriage**

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

207 **2.3.4 Domestic violence**

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

217 **2.3.5 Sexual incompatibility and extramarital affairs**

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

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

233 emotional affair which later becomes a physical affair. Infidelity is one of the primary reasons for marriage breakdown. It is
234 also one of the legal divorce reasons, besides living apart for more than a year and subjecting the partner to cruelty
235 (mental or physical" [37].

236 **2.3.6 Medical reasons**

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

243 **2.3.7 Addiction**

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

250 **2.3.8 Change in status**

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

256 **2.3.9 Lack of understanding**

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

266 **2.3.10 Spouse temperament**

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

274 **3. METHODOLOGY**

275 The study was conducted from the lens of the interpretivism paradigm. Since the interpretive paradigm pertains to the
276 understanding of the world as it is from individuals' subjective experiences it became useful to adopt it for the study. This
277 study adopted the qualitative approach. According to Cropley, the task of qualitative research is to gain insights into
278 constructions of reality, that is to tease out the nature of the world as it is experienced, structured, and interpreted by
279 people in the course of their everyday lives [43]. In this study, a qualitative approach was used to enable the researchers
280 to get direct explanations and views of the participants. Since the qualitative approach allows asking questions that come

281 in textual form to understand human experience, it was necessary to employ this approach for the study. Research
282 design, according to Cooper and Schindler, refers to simply as “the plan and structure of investigation so conceived as to
283 obtain answers to research questions” (p. 134) [44]. A case study design was employed in this study because since the
284 design explores a phenomenon in its natural setting holistically, it was necessary to employ it to unearth the issue of
285 marriage breakdown among young couples.

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

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

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

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

317 **4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

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

320 **4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Participants**

321 This sub-section presents the background information of the respondents. This comprised data on the sex, age, and
322 occupation of the respondents and number of years married before marriage breakdown. Twelve participants were
323 involved in the study. There were 9 males and 3 females involved in the study. The ages of the participants ranged from
324 22 to 33 years. The average number of years they were married before the breakdown of their marriage was 4 years. The
325 participants involved in the study were teachers (majority), traders, caterers, nurses, and shop attendants. The
326 background information of the participants in the study provides insight into the demographic characteristics of the
327 participants and can help to understand the context in which the participants experienced marriage breakdown. For
328 example, the fact that they came from different occupations indicates a diversity of experiences and perspectives.
329 Additionally, the fact that the participants were mainly in their 20s and early 30s suggests that they were relatively young
330 when they experienced marriage breakdown. The findings resonate with Enang who found that those who marry for the
331 first time in their teens are prone to marriage breakdown because the partners are usually less mature - intellectually,
332 emotionally, and experientially - in their teenage years than when older, and thus are probably less likely to make sound
333 marital choices [35].

334 **4.2 Reasons for Marriage Breakdown Among Young Couples**

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

341 **4.2.1 Lack of respect**

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

345 Our marriage broke down because he had been insulting me. He insulted me publicly without considering my feelings (P.
346 1).

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

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

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

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

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

360 **4.2.2 Lack of responsibility**

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

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

366 My partner used to shirk her responsibility. It becomes very disturbing because you have children who need to survive (P.
367 4).

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

375 **4.2.3 Differences in decision-making**

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

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

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

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

394 **4.2.4 Family interference**

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

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

401 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
402 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
403 to further my education rather than marrying this early (P. 1).

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

413 **4.2.5 Differences in values and beliefs**

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

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

420 I got sick but since my husband is not a Christian he went and consulted his friends who told him that my problem was
421 spiritual madness. Meanwhile, it's just a psychological problem I am having that needs peace of mind to overcome (P.
422 10).

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

431 **4.2.6 Infidelity**

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

435 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
436 know that he even cheating. You say that African men are polygamous, but some do cheat by not letting their wives or
437 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
438 was very annoying (P. 1).

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

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

448 **4.2.7 Miscommunication**

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

451 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
452 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
453 to further my education rather than marrying this early (P. 1).

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

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

463 **5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

464 Lack of respect, lack of responsibility, differences in decision-making, family interference, differences in values and
465 beliefs, infidelity, and miscommunication were identified as contributing factors to the breakdown of marriages. Lack of
466 respect was noted as the most significant issue, with participants reporting that their partner lacked respect for them and
467 this led to public insults and aggressive behaviour. Lack of responsibility was another key factor, with participants
468 mentioning that their partners did not meet their obligations to the family, such as providing for the children. Differences in
469 decision-making were also highlighted, with participants indicating that their partners made decisions without consulting
470 them or relied too heavily on their families for advice. Family interference was noted as a problem, with participants

471 indicating that their partner's family interfered in their marriage, leading to conflicts and contributing to the breakdown of
472 their relationship. Mutual respect, responsibility, clear communication, collaboration in decision-making, and minimal
473 family interference are crucial for the success and stability of a marriage. In all, the most significant issue identified in the
474 breakdown of marriages among young couples in Bomso was a lack of respect, followed by a lack of responsibility and
475 differences in decision-making.

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

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482
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484 **AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS**

485
486 "All the authors A, B & C designed the study, performed the analysis, wrote the protocol, and wrote the first draft of the
487 manuscript. 'Author A' and 'Author B' managed the analyses of the study. 'Author C' further managed the literature
488 searches and checked for plagiarism to reduce the similarity index to the barest minimum. All authors read and approved
489 the final manuscript."
490

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