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An Investigation of the Causes of Domestic Conflicts among Christian Families in Kwanza Sub-County of Trans-Nzoia County, Kenya

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Abstract: It's estimated that at least one-sixth of all Kenyan couple's experience at least one violent incident each year. One-fourth of all couples have at least one such violent episode sometime during their marriage. Wife abuse is more prevalent in Christian homes than most people believe, and guilt within the church keeps it repressed. The prevalence of domestic conflicts in Kwanza Sub-County of Trans-Nzoia County, Kenya displays a worrying trend. The domestic conflicts cases are skewed towards wife battering, negligence and verbal conflicts. However, religion seems to do very little yet it has a big role in shaping the society way of life. The society holds the church with high respect and many a times people will seek the council of the church in case of misunderstanding to resolve domestic issues that do not require the intervention of the local provincial administration. Therefore, the study sought to investigate the causes of domestic conflicts among Christian families in Kwanza Sub-County of Trans-Nzoia County, Kenya.

Keywords: Abusive Marriage, Divorce, Domestic Conflicts, Marital Conflicts.

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INTRODUCTION

Domestic conflicts are learned, purposeful behavior and are a manifestation of the abuser's need to achieve and maintain power and control over the victim. Abusive behavior is learned and reinforced: through observation; experience; in culture and in society; in the family; in communities including schools and peer groups; in faith, religious, and spiritual institutions; and through our failure to hold batterers accountable for their actions (Tracy, 2007).

Conflicts against women cut across nationalities, races and religions. The United Nations report provides a comprehensive study on girls and women; it underscores the connection between advancement and education, noting that women who go to school are more likely to lead successful and healthy lives to the benefit of society. Conversely, girls and women who are less educated or illiterate are more vulnerable (Alsdurf & Alsdurf, 1989).

A study by De Graaf & Kalmijn (2006) shows that personal grounds for divorce such as fighting, alcoholism, conflicts, tend to be mentioned more by couples with some of the demographic characteristics such as youthful marriages, parental divorce, multiple prior cohabitations, and poverty. As a result, cultural and demographic factors related to divorce push people into divorce via their own interpersonal means. It is interesting to note that domestic conflicts as one of the

reasons for divorce is less frequently mentioned in Africa than in Western countries.

The scriptures of the word of God are interpreted differently from church to church. Some churches teachings and values differ a lot between different Christian churches as well as in different church doctrines. Because of this, marital conflicts are rooted on one's background church and transition to new marriage life. On the contrary, the 'Christian' characteristic is now principally missing in Christian day marriages; this is frequently referred to as the desacralization of marriage. For a lot of Christian and non-Christians, marriage has become an individual choice rather than a covenant before God and this change has contributed to the approval of its temporal nature (Cherlin, 2004). In order to promote cohabitation of couples, Sande (2004) advised that spiritual differences is something modern day Christian churches must appreciate and not a cause of conflict as guided by Paul's epistle to the Roman Church on Romans 14:1-23 and also 1Corinthians 14:1-40.

In Kenya there has been a marked increase in domestic conflicts in the recent times (Kahumbi, 2004). Interestingly, religion particularly Christianity and Islam have done less in averting domestic conflicts. The Bible is the core point of reference for the Church. It highlights several principles of peacebuilding and reconciliation including love, justice, forgiveness and peace. These exalt the value of human lives and the rule

of law. The Church is called the body of Christ. To maintain the integrity, churches must advocate for peace and love among their adherents. Therefore, a need to show how the church is assisting its adherents in solving these domestic conflicts.

The study was based on Feminist theory. Patriarchy is the ultimate cause of all abuse against women. It has only been in the past few decades that domestic conflicts have been studied in detail. This feminist perspective on domestic conflicts is still fairly common. For instance, in a recent journal article several feminists' state: "domestic conflicts are an on sequence of patriarchy, and part of a systematic attempt to maintain male dominance in the home and in society (Nicole, 2005)." The theory was applied in investigating the causes of domestic conflicts among Christian families in Kwanza Sub-County of Trans-Nzoia County, Kenya

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design which enabled researcher go in the field to collect data on behavior of Christians in Kwanza Sub-county. The target population in the study included the members of the church, clergy and church leadership of evangelical churches.

The sample size was determined using the Fisher (1998) formulae; -

$$n = \frac{z^2 pq}{d^2}$$

Where;

n=the desired sample size (when population is greater 10,000)

Z= the standard normal deviate, set at 1.96, which corresponds to 95% confidence level.

p= the proportion was set at 50% since the were no studies on the adherence rates

$$q = 1.0 - 0.5 = (1 - 0.5) = 0.5$$

d= degree of accuracy desired, here set at 0.05 corresponding to the 1.96 z – statistic used in the numerator

In substitution,

$$n = 384$$

Simple random sampling technique will be employed in selection selecting Christian families form the evangelical churches. Purposive sampling will also be used to select the clergy.

The study targeted a sample size of 384 respondents who were determined using the Fisher (1998) formulae.

The data collection instruments where, Interview schedules, and focus group discussion. The study administered interview schedules on church leaders and clergy. Focused group discussions were used to uncover attitudes and assumptions people hold about issues and problems of conflict among Christian society. FGDs targeted church members. Data was analyzed employing SPSS version 22 using of both descriptive and inferential statistics. Data was presented in descriptive themes and in tables.

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

Causes of Conflicts among Christian Families

Table 1. Causes Of Conflicts among Christian Families

Statement	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Dev
Personal characters such as fighting, alcoholism, conflicts, youthful marriages, parental divorce, multiple prior cohabitations, and poverty	170	74	4.038	.998
Rates of divorce are lower if the husband is in a higher educational category than his wife.	175	76	4.322	.789
Family members belonging to two different churches will more often conflict.	193	84	4.271	1.112
Distant between couples due to vocational choices pose a great risk for marital conflicts	189	82	3.784	.887
Those who get married when young tended to blame marrying young, growing apart, and going out too much with friends	182	79	4.037	.996
Members of the Christian family Conflict over family roles	170	74	4.038	.998
Marital happiness decline for the majority couples after children are born.	175	76	4.322	.789
Conflict is caused by misunderstanding	193	84	4.271	1.112
Troubles with relatives and in-laws cause conflicts	189	82	3.784	.887

Sexual problems is cause of conflict in Christian couples	182	79	4.037	.996
Premarital cohabitation is cause of conflict	170	74	4.038	.998
Most couples quarrel over water and electricity bills, school fees arrears, debts, spending, among other financial issues	175	76	4.322	.789
Pregnancy and childbearing before marriage extensively amplify the likelihood of marital disputes and divorce	193	84	4.271	1.112
Non-religious affiliation on one partner is a cause of conflict among families	189	82	3.784	.887
The majority of the marriages lack proper knowledge to use during difficulties they experience in their marriage life	182	79	4.037	.996
Social media misuse leads to conflicts and is worsened by not only sending erotic messages but also pornographic pictures and videos	170	74	4.038	.998
Remarry result in marital conflicts	175	76	4.322	.789

Source: Research Data 2019

Key: SA-strongly agree, A-agree, N-Neutral, SD- strongly disagree, D-disagree.

The results in table 1 show that the respondents agree (mean 4.000) that Personal characters such as fighting, alcoholism, conflicts, youthful marriages, parental divorce, multiple prior cohabitations, and poverty; rates of divorce are lower if the husband is in a higher educational category than his wife; family members belonging to two different churches will more often conflict; distant between couples due to vocational choices pose a great risk for marital conflicts; those who get married when young tended to blame marrying young, growing apart, and going out too much with friends; members of the Christian family Conflict over family roles; marital happiness decline for the majority couples after children are born; conflict is caused by misunderstanding; troubles with relatives and in-laws cause conflicts; sexual problems is cause of conflict in Christian couples; premarital cohabitation is cause of conflict; most couples quarrel over water and electricity bills, school fees arrears, debts, spending, among other financial issues; pregnancy and childbearing before marriage extensively amplify the likelihood of marital disputes and divorce; non-religious affiliation on one partner is a cause of conflict among families; the majority of the marriages lack proper knowledge to use during difficulties they experience in their marriage life; social media misuse leads to conflicts and is worsened by not only sending erotic messages but also pornographic pictures and videos and remarrying result in marital conflicts.

The study established that the causes of domestic conflicts among Christian families include: Personal characters such as fighting, alcoholism, conflicts, youthful marriages, parental divorce, multiple

prior cohabitations, and poverty; rates of divorce are lower if the husband is in a higher educational category than his wife; family members belonging to two different churches will more often conflict; distant between couples due to vocational choices pose a great risk for marital conflicts; those who get married when young tended to blame marrying young, growing apart, and going out too much with friends; members of the Christian family Conflict over family roles; marital happiness decline for the majority couples after children are born; conflict is caused by misunderstanding; troubles with relatives and in-laws cause conflicts; sexual problems is cause of conflict in Christian couples; premarital cohabitation is cause of conflict; most couples quarrel over water and electricity bills, school fees arrears, debts, spending, among other financial issues; pregnancy and childbearing before marriage extensively amplify the likelihood of marital disputes and divorce; non-religious affiliation on one partner is a cause of conflict among families; the majority of the marriages lack proper knowledge to use during difficulties they experience in their marriage life; social media misuse leads to conflicts and is worsened by not only sending erotic messages but also pornographic pictures and videos and remarrying result in marital conflicts.

These findings are in agreement with the arguments and findings of many scholars. A study by De Graaf & Kalmijn (2006) shows that personal grounds for divorce such as fighting, alcoholism, conflicts, tend to be mentioned more by couples with some of the demographic characteristics such as youthful marriages, parental divorce, multiple prior cohabitations, and poverty.

Orbuch *et al.* (2002) found that level of education is closely related to intellectual advancement. It is a variable to consider when predicting divorce for African Christian couples in marriage; divorce threat decreased with greater education.

Similarly, Bumpass *et al.* (1991) found that rates of break up were lower among highly learned women, even after controlling for age at marriage. Kurdek (1993) also found that low levels of schooling for either spouse forecast divorce within the first four years of marriage.

Rates of divorce are lower if the husband is in a higher educational category than his wife than if they are among couples of the same educational status (Bumpass *et al.*, 1991; & Heaton, 2002) and are highest if the wife is in a higher educational category than her husband.

It is also significant to note that intellectual ability tends to provide as a substitute for other socio-demographic variables, such as income, premarital birth, parental divorce, and cohabitation (Orbuch *et al.*, 2002).

For a lot of Christian and non-Christians, marriage has become an individual choice rather than a covenant before God and this change has contributed to the approval of its temporal nature (Cherlin, 2004).

Sande (2004) advised that spiritual differences is something modern day Christian churches must appreciate and not a cause of conflict as guided by Paul's epistle to the Roman Church on Romans 14:1-23 and also 1Corinthians 14:1-40.

The study findings also revealed that, distant between couples due to vocational choices pose a great risk for marital conflicts. In addition to this, differences on earnings between couples, especially when a wife earns more than the husband as well as working environment associated with liquor and or working in fields dominated with singles pose a threat to modern day Christian marriages.

Bumpass *et al.* (1991); & Tzeng (1992) found that rates of divorce are high among couples in which the husband, or both husband and wife are unemployed during the first year of marriage. Irregular work schedules are also associated with marital conflicts. Presser (2000) found that among couples with children, working nights to a certain extent than days, increased the risk of divorce. Voydanoff (1991) indicate that education and earnings helps marital success.

Kurdek (1993) postulated that earnings are inversely associated to risk of divorce. While, Rogers (2004) found that wives' earnings were positively and linearly associated to the threat of divorce.

DeMaris & Rao (1992) discovered that the risk of divorce declines with age at marriage increases, this defence effect lessens as age at marriage increases. Individuals who get married at older ages were more likely to mention incompatibility and a lack of a sense of family as causes of divorce, Amato & Previti (2003).

According to Thompson & Walker (1991), women tend to monitor their relationships more closely than men, and become aware of relationship problems sooner, and are more likely to instigate discussions of relationship problems with their partners. On the other hand, Gottman (1994) observed that, men are more likely than women to pull out from discussions of relationship problems. For these reasons, women are more expected than men to instigate divorce (Kitson 1992). Given that marital conflicts and divorce are gendered experiences, it is not amazing that researchers have documented differences between men's and women's role conflicts as causes of divorce, Cleek & Pearson (1985); & Kitson (1992).

Research indicates, contrary to popular belief, that the wife's working outside the home does *not* increase marital problems or harm the children's development. Christians should abide to the teachings of Colossians 3:12-15, Ephesians 4:32 and 1 Peter 3:8-9.

Amato & Rogers (1997) found that poor communication was the main complaint for couples seeking counseling. On average, such couples talk for only four minutes or less per day.

According to Arnold (2002), marital happiness decline for the majority couples after children are born. Child bearing brings certain responsibilities which parents need to adjust to, safeguarding their marriage. Couples normally differ about how to raise and discipline children. Such different can be noted through jealousies and criticisms. Arnold (2002) went on to say children are magnificent blessings but they are not universally good for the all marriage. Amato & Previti (2003) believed that at times couples get carried with family crises to unpleasant levels.

Amato & Previti (2003) believed that troubles with relatives and in-laws are common particularly when one spouse remains reliant on his/her parents for riches or emotional support.

Rogers (2004) postulated that barrenness cannot be blamed on either couple, but needs attention for rectification from both in-laws and affected couple.

Arnold (2002) postulated that sexual problems take place in about 45% of the couples looking for marriage counseling.

DeVaus *et al.* (2003), sex imperative during marriage but the majority of Christian couples have sex

at least once a week, even after a decade. These scholars indicated that when making love, women enjoyed intercourse the mainly, but men enjoyed a variety of sexual activity. Furthermore, women connect love with sex more than men do. Because of this, apparently being adulterous doesn't mean as much to men as to women. Arnold (2002) went on to say men have been adulterous more often than women but that does not mean they were unhappy with their wives.

When women become adulterous, however, generally it is not for a short period because they are more likely to get emotionally and physically involved. Scholars such as Amato & Rogers (1997); Booth & Johnson (1988); Heaton (2002); & DeVaus *et al.* (2003) shows that premarital cohabitation is linked with lower levels of marital happiness and a higher danger of divorce.

Martin & Bumpass (1989); & Orbuch *et al.* (2002) believed that premarital cohabitation is more common among couples with lower education levels, and couples reporting parental divorce/separation. According to DeVaus *et al.* (2003), premarital cohabitation is non-Christian and non-traditional, and thus attracts individuals with unusual views of marriage and a greater openness to divorce. Most couples quarrel over water and electricity bills, school fees arrears, debts, spending, among other financial issues.

Teachman (2003); Heaton (2002); & DeVaus *et al.* (2003), premarital cohabitation is non-Christian and non-traditional, and thus attracts individuals w (2003) revealed that all marriages have financial problems. If available money cannot meet family demands, conflict over priorities is eminent.

Pregnancy and childbearing before marriage extensively amplify the likelihood of marital disputes and divorce. With an increase in the pain associated with raising a child which is not yours, chances of surviving of such marriages were slim. Going out of marriage in search of a child is a culturally practice of the most people which is totally against Christian values and norms since the bible teaches that children are a gift from God. Heaton (2002); & Martin & Bumpass (1989) postulated that premarital childbearing is connected with an increased risk of divorce. However, the birth of a child after marriage is a defending cushion against divorce. DeMaris & Rao (1992) found that the likelihood of divorce was notably reduced upon the birth of the first child. Fascinatingly, this outcome may be aligned to the gender of the child, as Morgan *et al.* (1988) found that parents of girls were more likely to divorce than parents of boys.

There is an extensive diversity of religious understandings of marriage. Christianity teaches of a spiritual amalgamation between couples' love reflecting God's love. Various religions consider marriage as

everlasting, although others do not take a hard line on divorce (*ibid*).

Morgan *et al.* (1988) have projected that persons who report belonging to some religious assembly have a fairly lower chance of divorce than those who say they have no religious affiliation. Furthermore, if couples share the same religious affiliation; their chances of divorce are even lower. Bramlett & Mosher (2002); Bumpass *et al.* (1991); & Heaton (2002) believed that little religious participation and religious heterogamy are also related to a larger risk of marital conflicts and divorce. Closely linked to this problem are behaviors within the framework of marriage that may account for the relationship between religiosity and divorce.

Amato & Rogers (1997) found that lesser church attendance was linked to an increased possibility of reporting problems emanating from jealousy, moodiness, infidelity, frustrating lifestyle, spending money, and drinking/drug use. Religious affiliation has always been one of the strongest reasons in influencing human behavior. The religious norms, values and behaviors that are reinforced by religion, have implicit religious meaning hence limiting chances for marital conflicts and divorce (Guttman, 1993).

The majority of the marriages lack proper knowledge to use during difficulties they experience in their marriage life. Accordingly, teaching would help them build stronger family ties (*ibid*). Ambert (2005) found out that some pastors and church leaders including some elders displayed their worry on people who involve them towards the final stages of their marital processes and procedures. Consequently, this hindered pre-marital counseling lessons. Nonetheless, the church leaders would end up sanctifies such marriages. Ambert (2005) went further to say this practice seems to be a permanent practice; there are no stern procedures to guard against it in church.

Social media misuse is worsened by not only sending erotic messages but also pornographic pictures and videos. Also, young couples and to some extent, middle adulthood are the major victims. The danger comes from pornographic images and videos coming from a member of the opposite sex, be it a friend, church mate, workmate or a stray message.

Mbwirire & Masunungure (2016) found out that social media platforms if misused may be an enemy not only marital life but also Christianity in general. This applies both to Christian church members and non-Christians. Further, these social media platforms are addictive, which impedes with time for social interaction and play between couples (*ibid*).

Remarry, although not always but frequently result in marital conflicts, and chances for divorce are

high. In addition, if one spouse is having kid(s) outside the marriage when the other does not have, such situation is worse compared to a situation where the involved couples had kids. Ambert (2005) postulated that remarriages are a risk factor for divorce, in great part because of the complications of reconstituted families. All marriages had one or both partners who had been in the past divorced and, of these, well over a third included two previously-divorced persons.

Amato (1996) revealed divorce is considerably higher in second marriages than it is in first marriages). Bramlett & Mosher (2002) noted that this style is more tremendous among women younger than 25 at the time of remarriage, and women from separated/divorced families. Martin & Bumpass (1989) found that chances of divorce were 25% higher in second marriages than first marriages, and dispute that individuals who remarry bring with them the same intrapersonal and interpersonal variables that led to divorce in their first marriage. Conversely, White & Booth (1998) argue that second marriages are less triumphant because they generally present more multifaceted family dynamics than first marriages.

Marital conflicts and divorce are gendered experiences, Cleek & Pearson (1985); & Kitson (1992) identified those differences between men's and women's accounts of divorce. For example, several studies have shown that former wives present longer and more multifarious details for their divorces than do former husbands.

In a related study, South (2001) assert that men are more likely to divorce when there is a high percentage of unmarried women with them in their locality and the same occurs for women who work, live and or associate in domains with a male predominance. Conditions of this nature heave married persons', mainly men's, chances of sexual disloyalty and of forming new relationships. Equally, when there is a sex ratio inequity favoring men in a particular cultural group in society, this group may also have higher rates of ongoing cohabitation and divorce (Harknett, 2008).

CONCLUSION

These the study established that the cause of domestic conflict among Christian couple families include; Character differences, educational and intellectual differences, spiritual differences, vocational choice, age of marriage difference, conflict over family roles, misunderstanding, troubles with relatives and in-laws, sexual problems, premarital cohabitation, financial problems, pregnancy and childbearing, non-religious affiliation, lack of teaching, social media misuse and remarriages.

Recommendations

- The study recommends that churches should have couple seminars to teach them on the causes of

domestic conflicts among Christian families to avert the vice.

- Modern technology such as social media like Facebook, WhatsApp, twitter, telegram among others should be used as platform to offer more information on how to avoid domestic conflicts in the society today.

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