

Causes of Marital Dissatisfaction and Divorce as Perceived by the People of Navrongo in the Upper East Region of Ghana

Joseph Akpadago Alfred Alunga Anovunga

Department of Education, St. John Bosco's College of Education, Post Office Box, 11, Navrongo-Ghana

Abstract

The study examined the causes of marital dissatisfaction and divorce as perceived by the people of Navrongo in the Upper East Region of Ghana. Data were gathered through the use of Marital Satisfaction Inventory and an in-depth interview. The sample size was 400 participants where 384 couples comprising 192 males and 192 females responded to the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI). Out of the 400 sample size, 16 people were interviewed. The stratified and quota sampling procedures were used to select the respondents to respond to the Marital Satisfaction Inventory while the Snowball sampling procedure was used to select respondents for the interview. The study showed that some couples in Navrongo were not satisfied with their marriages as indicated by those who responded to the MSI. Seven scales were used as indicators for marital satisfaction. These included, relationship, affection, love and appreciation, character, temperament, in-law issues, marital roles, and general evaluation. Couples would have been satisfied if the mean scores of the various scales were high enough to fall within the specified satisfied ranges. Data gathered from the interviewees in Navrongo revealed that spousal abuse caused couples to break their marriages. Whereas more males were involved in physical abuse, more females were accused of verbal abuse. Both husbands and wives were involved in extramarital affairs. Mothers-in-law were more troublesome in marriages than fathers-in-law. Counselling is therefore recommended for couples especially those who have marital challenges.

Keywords: Uxoricide, Magic potion, Annulment, Ordinance

1. Introduction

Marriage according to the Oxford Dictionary (1998) is the legal union of a man and woman in order to live together and often to have children. According to Abudu (2008), "Many married people are not happy, as a result, separation or different levels of divorce are increasing and this is creating many single parents, a majority of whom are women" (p. 177). Abudu further indicates that many relationships indefinitely remain at the level of boyfriend-girlfriend, without moving on to the next step of formal ceremonies that declare a pair as husband and wife. It appears people are hesitant to get into marriage of late. Abudu asked why a brief period of softly repeating a few words to each other at a public ceremony or signing documents that formally changed a boyfriend-girlfriend relationship into that of husband and wife make a relationship progressively sour, eventually bitter and even end in some form of separation.

Les and Leslie (2001, p.12) stated that:

Let's be honest. The 'till death do us part' of the marriage vow rings increasingly ironic. In the 1930s, one out of seven marriages ended in divorce. In the 1960s, it was one out of four. Of the 2.4 million couples who will get married this year in the United States, it is predicted that at least 50 percent of the marriages will not survive. And most startling, of those getting married for a second time, 60 percent will not make it. For too many couples, marriage has become 'till divorce do us part'.

To Wireko (2012), there are rampant family tragedies. She indicated that the more society transforms, the more thorny challenges the transformation brings. Family tragedies are happening in such rapid succession that one begins to wonder why we have discarded the more humane good neighbourliness of the past when one could walk into a neighbour's house without invitation but is welcomed. Wireko added that with all the stresses of modern day life, many heated family disputes are adding to the pressures in relationships turning little disagreements into nasty and or tragic incidence. Marital stress affects the foundation of prior successful marriages not only in Ghana, but the whole world.

Abudu (2008) puts it this way: "marriage is one of the most important sources of stress worldwide and, indeed since the dawn of time" (p. 178). In Africa and in most cultures, marriage is an important part of life to such an extent that if a man attains maturity and has not married, he is considered as a child and may not take part in some family meetings because of his marital status. It is not uncommon to hear that parents and relatives will normally coerce unwilling sons to get married notwithstanding what dissatisfaction that might be associated with the marriage.

The newspapers continually report marital dissatisfaction among couples. Stories in the media indicate that those who are supposed to be their better halves are rather committing the atrocities. Most of the cases result in nasty incidences where husbands murder their wives for various reasons. In May, 2012 several reports about marital discontent among couples were in the Daily Graphic. Agyeman (2012) reported that a 50-year-old man

was detained by the Tafo Akyem police for allegedly murdering his wife after accusing her of infidelity. Avoke (the accused) reportedly used a heavy stick to hit the head of his wife Ajoa from behind, before inflicting multiple machete wounds on her. The suspect began complaining that his wife was flirting with another person for which reason she showed him no respect. Tawiah and Andoh (2014) reported in the *Daily Graphic* that a 33-year-old woman Efua Badu, was arrested for setting a family of three ablaze. The three included Peter Amos Asobayeri, his wife Felicity, and their daughter Sarah. The story revealed that the woman could not stand the pain of losing her husband to another woman and therefore allegedly setting her husband, his new found lover and their daughter ablaze, leading to their death. As Bekoe (2012) reported in the *Daily Graphic*, a recent study was conducted by Adinkrah, a sociologist in Ghana which revealed that uxoricide also known as spouse homicide is a phenomenon widespread. He said, between January 1, 1990, and December 31, 2005, the *Daily Graphic* reported on 60 husband-wife slaying incidence that occurred in Ghana. According to the report, in four (6.7 %) of the 60 cases the uxoricidal husband killed one or more victims in addition to the wife. Most of the uxoricide cases involved working class families. The predominant trigger in Adinkrah's study was husbands' suspicion of infidelity in the past or at the time of the homicide. In 19 of the 60 cases studied (30.7%), infidelity was the motivating factor. The second most common trigger in uxoricidal killings was the wife's threat to divorce her husband, which occurred in 8 of the 60 cases representing (13.3%). Other factors included wives' refusal to submit to demand for sexual intercourse.

Dissatisfaction in marriage stirs a lot of wrath, and if this is not checked properly, the propensity for spouses to hurt each other tends to increase tremendously. According to Glenn (as cited in Benokraitis, 2008), marital happiness decreases when couples experience poverty, job loss, and financial problems. Therefore it does not necessarily mean that marriage would make one happier than he/she is. With regard to marital happiness, Benokraitis indicated that "marriage itself isn't a magic potion that makes us healthier and happier" (p. 300). The quality of our marriage is much more important for our health than simply getting or being married. Medical memo (as cited in Benokraitis, 2008) reveals that the quality of the marriage is critical for our emotional and physical well-being.

A spouse may increase stress levels and stress can contribute to higher blood pressure, which, in turn, can lead to heart disease. Emotional stress can also create psychological and physical problems that affect the spouses. This can also deteriorate the spouse's general lifestyle including taking drugs or alcohol with the intention of reducing the pain. When the pain becomes unbearable for the spouse, he/she may either seek for separation or divorce. Women are not exempted from causing atrocities when they are not satisfied in their marriages.

The subject of divorce as a social phenomenon is an important research topic in sociology. In many developed countries, divorce rates increased markedly during the twentieth century. Among the nations in which divorce has become commonplace are United States, Canada, Australia, Germany, New Zealand, Scandinavia and the United Kingdom (Williams, Sawyer & Wahlstrom, 2005).

Etymologically, divorce [from Latin *Divortere* 'to turn aside'] is the legal dissolution of a marriage; a severance or separation (Oxford Dictionary, 1998). As it is indicated by Williams *et al.*, (2005), divorce (or the dissolution of marriage) is the final termination of a marital union, cancelling legal duties and responsibilities of marriage and dissolving the bonds of matrimony between the parties unlike annulment, which declares the marriage null and void. Wiggins, Wiggins, and Zanden (1994) posit that, societies increase commitment to certain roles by constraining the opinion available to individuals. For example, the marital role is more difficult to leave than the friendship role, partly because our society regulates marriage and divorce. Consequently, the costs of divorce are higher than the costs of ending a friendship. The cost involved in divorce could far exceed financial commitments like paying compensations, sharing of property, maintenance and custody and the like to emotional shattering which can be irreversible and devastating.

Burke and Reitzes (as cited in Wiggins *et al.*, 1994) pointed out that we are also committed to maintaining certain identities and that we act to sustain and support those identities. They further indicated that we might remain in a relationship with fewer rewards than we would like because to end it would destroy others' views of us and, ultimately, our views of ourselves as "devoted spouses". It is not uncommon to hear couples say that they are just managing to stay in the marriage because of one reason or the other. As for the women they will add that I am staying in the marriage because of my children.

Married couples or those who intend to marry would definitely have interest in a frightening phenomenon of divorce especially where the media portray a soaring high percentage of divorce cases. A thought provoking question one could ask is why the increase in divorce when marriage life supposedly is expected to be a blissful institution? The divorce phenomenon is not only reported in Ghana but other countries like USA.

In the USA the percentage of marriages ending in divorce varies from around 55 percent of all US marriages to 50 percent of first marriages and 60 percent of second marriages. In the United Kingdom, according to Office of National Statistics (ONS) marriages ending in divorce after 15 years in England and Wales rose from just under 1 in 4 (22%) of all marriages in 1970 to a third (33%) of all marriages in 1995 (Williams *et al.*,

2005). From the same source, a number of countries have since the 1970s legislated to permit divorce, including Italy (1970), Spain (1981), Ireland (1996), and Malta (2011). Today, the only countries which do not allow divorce is the Philippine (though Muslims have the right to divorce) and the Vatican City, an ecclesiastical state, which has no procedure for divorce.

As a prospective researcher, visiting the district court of Kassena-Nankana Municipal to enquire and obtain data on divorce was a conscientious act. The registrar of the court acknowledged that there were divorce cases, however, only a few cases were reported. Following are the records; July 2009-July 2010 seven cases; July 2010- July 2011 11 cases; July 2011-July 2012 13 cases; and July 2012-July 2013 five cases of divorce available to the court. Further enquiries were made about the number of marriages registered at the court in the Kassena-Nankana Municipal. The available records indicated the following: In 2012 six ordinance marriages and 14 registered marriages were recorded. In 2011 there were two 2 ordinance marriages and seven registered marriages recorded. The available records clearly showed that many of the couples do not go to the court for marriage registration and therefore do not go through the court procedures for divorce.

Though the available data collated at the district court in Navrongo were not as anticipated, there was the need to visit the regional capital to ascertain whether the divorce phenomenon was anything different from what pertained in Navrongo. The Registrar of the District Court in Bolgatanga showed only one divorce case filed in 2011. He further said that the petitioner did not pursue the case after her first appearance. In 2012 and 2013, there was no case filed for divorce. There was yet another court to obtain authentic records on divorce which was the High Court in Bolgatanga. The following were the divorce figures: 2010 one case, 2011 one case, 2012 five cases, and 2013 one case. It was evident that most of the records available in the courts did not tally with the 2010 Population and Housing Census report showing that divorce cases were high. Navrongo Health Research Centre (NHRC) is recognised as a credible institution which keeps data of the people in Navrongo. The data obtained there for marital status regarding those couples who had separated was 1,353 and the divorced figure 880 (Navrongo Health and Demographic Surveillance System [NHDSS], 2010). Causes of marital dissatisfaction are many and varied and so this research intends to explore these and possible causes of divorce.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

People who are unhappy in their marriages do not always end up in divorce courts. Instead, they may experience marital burnout (Benokraitis, 2008). Kayser (as cited in Benokraitis, 2008) explains marital burnout as the gradual deterioration of love and ultimate loss of an emotional attachment between partners. This process can go on for a long time and even though couples can share household chores, one spouse may not render emotional support for the other. Sometimes one partner may hide dissatisfaction for many years and eventually where the costs in the relationship become much greater than the benefits, the couple will probably seek for divorce.

Goode (as cited in Feldman, 1996) indicated that the rise in divorce is not just a U.S. phenomenon but that the divorce rate has accelerated over the last several decades in most industrialised countries except for Japan and Italy. Glenn and Shelton (as cited in Rice, 1999) stated that “divorce rates vary from group to group and relate to factors such as age at marriage, religion, occupation, income, education, ethnicity, geographic area of the country in which one resides, and parental divorce ” (p. 517). Writing about the divorce phenomenon in America, Harvey and Pauwels (as cited in Papalia, Olds & Feldman, 2002) stated that “the annual number of divorces has tripled since 1960; more than one million children are involved in divorces each year” (p. 354).

Divorce has a devastating effect on the couple, the families, and society at large. Hetherington (as cited in Wortman, Loftus & Marshall, 1992) stated that “immediately following the breakup of parents’ marriage, most children feel some anger and resentment, anxiety, depression, and perhaps even guilt” (p. 298). Wortman *et al.*, (1992) argued that others suffer sustained problems, including increased aggression, non-compliance with parents and general acting out, coupled with declines in academic achievement and the quality of peer relationships.

At times, the personalities that are involved in the divorce phenomenon call for not just investigating into its causes, but a proactive pragmatic intervention. If bishops of churches and marriage counsellors are all affected and suffering the consequences of the divorce phenomenon, then the situation calls for remedial action. Glenn (as cited in Feldman, 1996) revealed that survey data show that most people want to get married at some time in their lives, and close to 95 percent eventually do. Even people who divorce are more likely than not to get remarried, some for three or more times- a phenomenon known as serial marriage. Feldman indicates that when people do marry, the probability of divorce is high particularly for younger couples. With regards to U.S. he stated that even though divorce rates appear to be declining since they peaked in 1981, 60 percent of all first marriages still end in divorce. This situation is never good with about 60 percent of marriages ending in divorce. As divorce became easier in western countries, there was increased interest in developing therapies to help couples resolve their difficulties. In couples’ therapy the focus is on the marital relationship (Marshall & Firestone, 1999).

By observation, some couples are not satisfied in their marriages. Dissatisfaction in marriages is never the

intention of right-minded people. Therefore if couples were not forced into marriages, what could have been responsible for discordant in many marriages? Divorce cases occur in Navrongo as it happens in other parts of the world. Couples marry with the hope of staying together in harmony so that their marriages would be relatively permanent. This is evident during Christian marriage ceremonies where marriage vows are taken. An instance of marriage vows like promising to stay together for better and for worse; till death do us part; cannot be understated. Nowadays, spouses are not ready to accept the worse when it does occur.

Haseley (2006) conducted a research in America on the topic, marital satisfaction among newly married couples: associations with religiosity and romantic attachment style. Adonu (2005) on his part looked at, psychosocial predictors of marital satisfaction in British and Ghanaian cultural settings. Alder (2010) adds up to the number of researchers who delved into marital satisfaction. Adler's thesis topic was Age, education level, and length of courtship in relation to marital satisfaction. Similar topics could have been replicated in the Upper East Region especially Navrongo.

Marital satisfaction is not a new topic in research because apart from the few foreign researches that were stated earlier, some researchers within Ghana also did work on marital satisfaction. Ahene (2010) worked on the marital satisfaction: A case study of spouses in Cape Coast Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. Ackumey (2011) also did similar work but the topic was the impact of conflict management of marital satisfaction among couples of Duakor, Cape Coast, Ghana. These researchers though worked on marital satisfaction, the other variables did not directly outline causes of marital dissatisfaction and divorce.

Navrongo was the research area where the research was carried out. The literature revealed that research works were carried out on marital satisfaction, however, concerning causes of marital dissatisfaction and causes of divorce research has not been done. It was therefore prudent to delve into causes of marital dissatisfaction and causes of divorce. After carefully considering what other researchers have already done on marital satisfaction, it was expedient to work on the topic, "causes of marital dissatisfaction and divorce as perceived by the people of Navrongo. The study therefore examined the causes of marital dissatisfaction and divorce as perceived by the people of Navrongo in the Upper East Region of Ghana. Specifically, the objectives were to investigate the causes of marital dissatisfaction among married couples of Navrongo Municipality in the Upper East Region of Ghana as well as to explore the causes of divorce in Navrongo Municipal.

The following research questions guided the study:

Research Question 1: What are the causes of marital dissatisfaction as perceived by married spouses in Navrongo?

Research Question 2: What are the causes of divorce as perceived by married couples in Navrongo?

1.1.1 Significance of the Study

Rice (1999) indicates that all couples, both those who achieve marital success and those who do not, experience problems and stress in and outside their relationship. A distinguishing factor between the two couples is that those who experience successful marriages are able to solve their problems and manage marital stress properly.

It is hoped that counsellors would benefit from the findings of this study in the following way, equipping themselves with specific issues in marriages that can cause marital dissatisfaction. Counsellors will use those issues like relationship, affection, character, in-law issues, marital roles, temperament and general evaluation to guide their clients in their marriages.

Furthermore, the successful completion of this study will serve as a source of reference material for counsellors to grasp and appreciate the factors which cause marital dissatisfaction in marriages. Gary (2007) stated that the Christian counsellors, Les and Leslie Parrott note that even though most marriages have good beginnings, sooner or later everyone bumps into some bad things. When couples are not guided properly to appreciate the dynamics of marital conflicts, then such expectations normally would result in fracas. Eshlesman and Wilson (1995) acknowledged Scanzoni's argument that, to understand the dynamics of husband and wife interaction, the first step is to throw out the notion that equilibrium or stability is a necessary ideal, and the second step is to throw out the idea that conflict is by nature bad or unhealthy within marriage. Counsellors therefore would equip themselves with possible causes of marital dissatisfaction discussed in this research so that they can help couples facing such problems.

Married couples will learn to avoid potential conflict factors in their marriages for these are signpost for caution to married couples. Lynch (as cited in Sarafino, 2002) posited that "being lonely or having a broken heart is a risk factor for heart disease because widowed, divorced, and never-married individuals have higher death rates from heart disease than married people do" (p. 104).

1.1.2 Delimitation of the Study

The study basically focused on causes of marital dissatisfaction and divorce among the people of Kassena-Nankana Municipality. The scope of this research did not include measures to make those who are not satisfied to attain satisfaction. The study did not also intend to reconcile broken marriages. Other districts in the Upper East Region of Ghana were not included in the study.

1.1.3 Limitations of the Study

When this research work was embarked upon, some possible challenges were envisaged to militate against the smooth conduct of it. However, what was encountered far exceeded what was anticipated. Some of the limitations included communication barrier, poor attitude of some respondents such as not willing to cooperate and lack of accessibility to some communities.

Measures were put in place to engage interpreters for interpretation during the administration of the inventory. However, any time interpreters were not available, work slowed down considerably especially communities where the illiteracy rate was high. Though measures were put in place to engage interpreter during the administration of the inventory, some of the concepts were misconstrued by respondents. It was easy administering the Marital Satisfaction Inventory to the literate population than their illiterate counterparts. It must be stated that, generally, administering the inventory took a longer time than expected because of the determination to ensure that all items on the inventory were well ticked. With support from the research assistants, all items were cross checked to ensure proper completion of the inventory.

Poor attitude of some of the respondents during the administration of the inventory was frustrating and discouraging. We took our time to explain our mission to respondents but some felt that the exercise would generate income and so they needed their share of the money. Others also complained that the questions were invading their privacy. For instance, some respondents exclaimed especially among the illiterate folks when questions that were asked bordered on sexual satisfaction. This brought about time wasting because we had to spend more time on one respondent trying to explain our mission again and again while reassuring confidentiality in order to obtain responses. The way and manner by which they answered created suspicion as to the authenticity of responses.

Besides, more divorcées than divorcés obliged easily to be interviewed. It was my intention and effort to interview the pair of those who divorced. This would have given a more vivid picture of couples' opinion of what causes divorce. It was intriguing to find conflicting responses from previous better halves slaying allegations on each other. By the snowball sampling techniques counterparts of spouses were traced to hold interview sessions but most of these efforts were thwarted. Time, money and energy were wasted in some movements made even without being granted permission for the interview to be conducted.

Accessibility to some communities was also a challenge. We could not use a car to some of the places. The journey that was shorter ended up being longer because the alternative routes were very far. Areas that we decided to use bicycles led to energy sapping and serious fatigue. Procedure for sampling was slightly affected because of poor road.

1.1.4 Methodology

The research design used for the study was the survey design. The ultimate goal is to learn about a large population by surveying a sample of that population and this approach is called a descriptive survey (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The population for the study constituted married people and those who were divorced in the Kassena-Nankana Municipal. The total population of married people in the municipal as stated in the 2010 Ghana Statistical Service report was 33,439 and in the same Ghana Statistical Service report, 1,198 were divorced.

The sample size for the study was 400 respondents. Part of the sample size of 384 which covered 35 electoral areas of the Kassena-Nankana Municipal of the Upper East Region of Ghana responded to the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI) while 16 divorcees were interviewed. The stratified and quota sampling procedures were used to select the respondents to respond to the Marital Satisfaction Inventory in 35 zones of the study area. Snowball sampling procedure was also used to select respondents for the interview. The main instruments that were used to collect data included an adapted Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI) and an interview guide. The Marital Satisfaction Inventory which was designed for married couples was made up of two forms; thus Form A for men and Form B for women. Each of the forms contains 30 items, designed in a 4-point likert-type scale (Very True, True, Not True, and Not at all True) (Essuman, 2010). The instrument is categorised into seven scales and each scale has specific items peculiar to that scale which measures marital satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction for that scale. Depending on the mean that is obtained for the sub-total of that scale, marital satisfaction or dissatisfaction is determined. The table presented indicates categories of scales, their items and ranges for satisfied and dissatisfied.

Table 1: Scales Indicating Satisfied or Dissatisfied

Scales	Satisfied	Dissatisfied
1: Relationship (items 2,5,10,20,21,25)	16-24	6-15
2: Affection, love & appreciation (items 3,4,16,23,27)	13-20	5-12
3: Character (items 6,12,18,19,22,28)	16-24	6-15
4: Temperament (items 13,14,29)	8-12	3-7
5: In-law issues (items 11,17,24)	8-12	3-7
6: Marital roles (items 9,15,26)	8-12	3-7
7: General evaluation (items 1,7,8,30)	11-16	4-10

Table 1 shows the various scales and their items for marital satisfaction can be determined depending on the mean score that is obtained after computing all the items for a scale. For instance, items from the Marital Satisfaction Inventory on relationship include; 2, 5, 10, 20, 21, and 25. Therefore we generate relationship = marital2+ marital5+ marital10+ marital20+ marital21+ marital25. Generate relationship on satisfaction = 1 if relationship > 15 & relationship !=. Replace relationship on satisfaction = 2 if relationship < 16 & relationship !=.

A semi-structured type of interview guide was designed to facilitate the interview sessions according to specific themes. The interview guide was formulated to include four main items. The interviewees were mainly the divorced. Millan and Schumacher (2001) indicated that after the questions have been written a pilot test is necessary as a check for bias in the procedures, the interview or the questions. This is to ensure reliability for the instrument. When the pilot test was conducted, views from an expert in the University of Cape Coast was sought to evaluate the questions for intent, clarity and appropriateness. The interview guide was deemed appropriate to be used for the interview.

The data gathered for the study were scored and analysed statistically using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software version 16. Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) were used to present data collected.

1.1. 5 Results and Discussion

Research question 1: What are the causes of marital dissatisfaction as perceived by married spouses in Navrongo?

The causes of marital dissatisfaction were investigated within the following scales; Relationship, Affection, love & Appreciation, Character, Temperament, In-law Issues, Marital Role, and General Evaluation as perceived by the married couples in Navrongo. Their responses are indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: Indicators of Marital Satisfaction/dissatisfaction among Respondents

MSI	N	Mean	Total Scores of Respondents
Relationship	384	12.0	4611
Affection, love & Appreciation	384	9.6	3677
Character	384	11.9	4575
Temperament	384	5.4	2088
In-law Issues	384	5.5	2112
Marital Role	384	6.0	2308
General Evaluation	384	6.9	2667

The overall mean score was 57.4 (total scores of respondents / N)

Table 2 indicates that married couples in Navrongo were dissatisfied with their marriages. The mean scores of all the seven scales specified in the scoring guide of the Marital Satisfaction Inventory were low (fell within the ranges of dissatisfied) indicating dissatisfaction.

What exactly leads to marital dissatisfaction are viewed by different people differently (Benokraitis, 2008). According to Baron and Byrne (1991) "people are like kites in the wind, influenced by whatever breeze is blowing at a given moment" (p. 483). Couples respond differently to similar situations in marriage due to the concept of individual differences.

Ann (as cited in Baron & Byrne, 1991) asked her readers, "if you had it to do over again, would you marry the person to whom you are now married?" (p. 289). More than fifty thousand people responded and out of which 55% said yes while 45% said no. Definitely, this was an indication that many people were not pleased with their marriages.

Communication is an important component in marital relationship. However, due to lack of clarity or presence of confusion in the communication network exchanged by couples (Nwoye, 1991) it can pose a potential threat to the marriage and generates marital dissatisfaction. To Esere and Salihu, (2013) two people cannot live happily without communication.

According to Bryant, Rand and Jennifer (2001) in-law issues can contribute to happier marriage if couples get along with them. On the other hand if couples do not get along with in-laws, the marriage can experience discord. Abudu (2008) asserted that a sensible mother in-law would wait to be invited for guest privileges by the

couple and not by only her son or daughter in that marriage. To him repeated invitations that are one-sided can ruin a marriage.

Taking marital roles for instance, Henslin (2003) stated that, in earlier generations, the responsibilities and privileges of husbands and wives were clearly defined. This meant that newlyweds knew what they could legitimately expect from each other. In contrast, today's much vaguer guidelines leave couples to work out more aspects of their respective roles on their own. Many find it difficult to figure out how to divide up responsibilities for work, home, and children.

According to Holtzworth-Munroe and Jacobson (as cited in Baron & Byrne, 1991) research findings suggest that couples experiencing dissatisfaction are likely to attribute negative actions by a spouse to stable traits and characteristics. For that matter they see little hope of change. In contrast, couples who are not experiencing challenges of marital distress tend to attribute negative actions by their spouses to external, temporary causes. Indeed, spouses who face discontentment in their marriage say that their partner would never change, 'that is how he/she is'. Discontentment in marriage has the tendency to elicit negative attributes from couple more than positive attributes.

Research Question 2: What are the causes of divorce as perceived by married couples in Navrongo?

The causes of divorce as perceived by the divorced were elicited during an interview session. Respondents expressed their views on causes of marital discontentment which eventually led to their divorce. The views of respondents were categorized into specific themes for discussion. These issues included abuse (physical and verbal), extramarital affair, interference from family (in-laws), unmet (unfulfilled) expectation, poor communication problems, infertility, educational status and, habits.

Three pair of divorced couples were interviewed and all of them presented different problems that caused their divorce. Interviews were independently carried out so none of the interviewees knew about others who were equally interviewed. Some of the interviewees had experienced multiple divorces of about three times a condition I will termed 'serial divorce'.

Abuse of spouse was frequently reported by interviewees from both males and females. Generally, the trend was that whereas the males reported of wives verbally abusing them, the females on the other hand reported of physical abuse from their husbands. Out of the 16 respondents, 11 people representing about 68.8% indicated that they were abused by their spouses. One of the spouses who was abused had this to say;

In the night, chief went in to have an affair with the visitor. The lady ran out into my room for refuge. Chief was infuriated by that and came into my room with a hoe to hit my head several times until I collapsed. I gained consciousness on the sixth day. I sat up and blood oozed out my nostrils. They rushed me to hospital for medical attention. This affected my brains and I have constant headache which sometimes impede my reasoning. I can't go to the saloon because of the pain. After recovering from this abuse, I packed and left.

Extramarital affairs was very high among the respondents. Couples attributed infidelity to their spouse who betrayed the marital trust. All other respondents did not attribute infidelity to themselves except one of the male interviewees who acknowledged that he was caught cheating and that caused the divorce. In one instance, the husband never suspected that the wife could cheat on him, but unfortunately to him, the wife did. The very incidence of meeting a man in his wife's room ended their marriage. During the interview, a victim had this to say, "My husband went in for another woman and because of that he wasn't taking care of my children and I so I left him." Another said that, "I could no longer stand his constant chasing after women. Surprisingly the girls he is following are not up to my standard."

There was congruence between a divorcé and a divorcée on their sexual lifestyle as a problem. Both of them discussed sex as a problem. However, whereas the wife was not sexually satisfied, the husband also felt that he did not have any problem. It is becoming common to hear people use sex enhancing drugs in order to engage in sexual intercourse. Keesling (2006) indicated that some of the earliest attempts at treating sexual problems involved the use of aphrodisiacs. Some interviewees in passing said they use aphrodisiacs because their wives desire more sex.

Categories of respondents who mentioned extramarital affairs, expressed deep emotions portraying hurt in a great magnitude. According to Rice (1999) "extramarital affairs have varying effects on married people and their marriages. Some marriages are never the same afterwards" (p. 488). Buunk (as cited in Rice, 1999) noted that guilt, anger, jealousy, distrust, loss of respect, and the destruction of love and intimacy are associated with extramarital affairs.

God created sex and had a purpose in mind when he created it. Sex to Olukoya (2012) was made for procreation and companionship in marriage. He argues that when sex is within the confines of marriage, it attracts God's blessings, but when it is done outside marriage, it brings plenty of problems, woes, tragedy and even death to those involved.

Interviewees mentioned mothers' in-law as the most disturbing personality in their marital relationship. None of respondents surprisingly mentioned specifically that fathers in-law had incurred their displeasure. Issues

they raised included, mothers' in-law not appreciating what they (daughters in-law) were putting into the marriage, interfering into their private issues like sexual intercourse especially where infertility was a problem. Reporting on what a male said concerning their divorce, he said, "My wife wanted us to rent a room elsewhere instead of staying with my family. She complained that she cannot cook for the entire family. When I refused to comply, she packed out." There was complain about disturbance from fathers' in-law by sons' in-law. But sons' in-law complained about interferences from mothers' in-law.

Heward-Mills (2012) commented on relationship with in-law that your in-law can do unacceptable things just like your parents. He further stated the difference between your parents and your in-law as your inability to tell your in-law your real sentiments without stirring up troubles; so learn to overlook certain things.

People may marry with a lot of expectations to derive from the marriage. When these are not met the marriage usually turns out to be unpleasant. In addition to unmet expectations, some respondents set unrealistic expectation. Gary (2007) indicated that unrealistic expectations can lead to disillusionment. Interviewees indicated that they thought their marriages were going to be ever blissful, unique and characterised with peace without quarrel. Perhaps doing some comparison with other failing marriages. One of them remarked, "He used to bath me like a baby and I felt like a queen. I least expected that he could treat me that way. Men! Men! They are wicked". Another interviewee reported that her sexual life was shattered. She said, "My husband was so boring sexually. I was always left half way. My sexual life was unfulfilled far below my expectation."

According to Les and Leslie (2001) "The expectations you bring to your partnership can make or break your marriage. Don't believe the myth that you and your partner automatically come with the same expectations for marriage" (p. 41). Instead, remember that the more likely you are to create a vision of marriage that you agree on, and that is unique to the two of you the better.

Many people apparently fail to realize that meaningful marriages grow slowly and only with commitment and effort. Often there is insensitivity, self-centred attitudes, impatience, inadequate skill in relating and great disappointment and disillusionment when the set expectations are not attained quickly (Gary, 2007). People should be made to understand that marital expectations do not just happen, they need to work to fulfil them.

Communication is vital in a sustaining marriage relationship. According to Nacino-Brown, Oke and Brown (1990) basically communication means the transfer, transmission, or exchange of ideas, knowledge, beliefs or attitudes from one person to another. All the interviewees who mentioned communication as a problem attributed poor communication to their spouse either than themselves. Issues raised were that, "my spouse did not know how to talk to me politely, she was proud in her language, that is, she speaks without courtesy". Other issues were that spouses misconstrued messages sent and therefore reacted inappropriately and irrationally. A spouse reported, "My wife was not a good communicator, and so she pushed me out to derive comfort outside my marriage".

Infertility/sterility issues were not many among the interviewees, however the affected persons indicated that the situation led to general breakdown of peace in the marriage. This was the way a lady put it, "my husband could not perform and as a result we didn't have any child. There wasn't peace at all in the house". I also gathered that some couples would not seek medical advice as if they knew their problems already about the issue of infertility. Considering the gravity of infertility/sterility, Thompson and Hickey (1999) noted that in many preindustrial societies in which children are of particular importance, sterility or impotence are primary grounds for divorce. People are using aphrodisiacs to enhance their sexual performance.

The educational status of spouses was another crucial issue of my findings from the interview. When men were higher in their educational level than their female counterparts, less fracas was encountered. An excerpt from the interview was a man who supported his wife to further her education at the degree level. However, he obtained his Diploma in Basic Education certificate which is lower than the wife. After she graduated, her change of attitude stirred marital discontentment in the family. He said this, "You try to raise her status after which demeaning comes in. She portrayed negative attitudes which go against cultural norms that we have grown in. She refused to carry out her household chores now."

Unchanging habits/attitudes irritated the other spouse and created confusion in marriages. Habits that were dominating included alcoholism, smoking, returning home late in the night, nagging, dressing shabbily, and so on. A female interviewee attributed the husband's low sperm count condition to alcoholism. Another said, "my brother, I tell you that she was such a callous woman I have never seen in my life." Habits that were so annoying as indicated by Rice (1999) that husbands and wives complained about were terrible table manners, careless about personal cleanliness, smokes or drinks too much, cracks knuckles, snores too loudly. The rest are; goes to bed too late, won't get up in the morning, leaves dirty dishes scattered all over the house, never replaces the cap on the toothpaste and so on.

When vows are pronounced during marriage ceremonies, a spouse can take his/her marriage for granted knowing that the other spouse cannot and should not break the vow. The vow 'for better for worse' should be reworded. Les and Leslie (2001) commented on the aspect of marriage vow which is "till death do us part". They posited that for too many couples, marriage has become "till divorce do us part." This is what Macionis (2001)

has to say about the popular marriage vow “Till death us do part”. Macionis expatiated on the marriage vow by saying that in reality divorce is as likely as death to end today’s marriage.

When the sixteen people were interviewed, they expressed their understanding of marriage and the explanation of marriage from interviewees were consistent. They understood what marriage was. On the whole, marriage was explained as the union between a man and a woman who have agreed to share everything together, love each other, live together and raise children. Others added that marriage is not just between the man and woman but the union of two families that is from the bride’s and bridegroom’s families. The understanding as captured during the literature review by Schwartz and Scott (2003) who reiterated the meaning of marriage as a union between people that unite partners sexually, socially and economically; that is relatively consistent over time, and that accords each member certain agreed upon rights.

Interviewees’ views about marriage agreed with Thompson and Hickey (1999) who explained that “marriage is a legally recognized economic and sexual relationship between two or more persons that includes mutual rights and obligations and is assumed to be permanent” (p. 373).

Determining whether interviewees were legitimately married and to be sure that the right caliber of respondents were the ones I was dealing with yielded positive results. In trying to find out how interviewees got married, I realized that some of them actually cohabitated and eventually broke their relationship. Therefore, views from cohabiters were not part of the analysis since they were not legally married.

Cohabitation according to Casper and Bianchi (2011) has been expressed variously by researchers as ‘shacking up’, living in sin, living together, persons of the opposite sex sharing living quarters, doubling up, and sleeping together. Cohabitation is where adults live together in a sexual relationship without being married (Henslin, 2003). People stay in cohabitation and never graduate into fully fledged marital status. Eventually, they soon get fed up staying together, break their relationship, gnash their teeth and begin to regret their actions.

1.1.6 Conclusion

Couples were not satisfied in the following areas; relationship, affection, love and appreciation, character, temperament, in-law issues, marital roles, and general evaluation

On divorce, abuse of spouse whether verbal or physical, mothers in-law, couples setting over ambitious expectations, unfulfilled expectations, communication, Infertility/sterility, unfulfilled sexual intercourse, indulgence in extramarital affairs, disrespect of the head of the family (husband), habits/attitudes, among others lead to divorce.

Counselling offers couples who are not satisfied in the marriages the opportunity to discuss issues explicitly with counsellors which might spice their marriage and enhance their plight at the time. Counselling has the tendency to enhance the quality of marriage in the areas of relationship, affection, character, temperament, in-law issues, marital roles and general evaluation. However, in the Kassena-Nankana municipal, there is no counselling centre for couples who are not satisfied in their marriages to visit. No wonder about 90% of the couples were not satisfied with their marriages.

References

- Abudu, A. O. (2008). *Getting married? Staying married?* Accra: Creative Opportunities.
- Ackumey, G. J. A. (2011). *The impact of conflict management of marital satisfaction among couples of Duakor, Cape Coast Ghana: A group guidance approach*. Unpublished master’s thesis, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast.
- Adler, E. S. (2010). *Age, education level, and length of courtship in Relation to marital satisfaction*. Unpublished master’s thesis, Pacific University
- Adonu, J. K. (2005). *Psychosocial predictors of marital satisfaction in British and Ghanaian cultural settings*. Unpublished Doctoral thesis, School of Social Sciences and Law Brunel University.
- Agyeman, N. K. (2012, May 28). Jealous husband murders wife. *Daily Graphic* (No. 18852),p. 3.
- Ahene, J. C. (2010). *Who worked on the marital satisfaction: A case study of spouses in Cape Coast Pentecostal and Charismatic church*. Unpublished master’s thesis, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast.
- Baron, R. A., & Byrne, D. (1991). *Social psychology: Understanding human interaction* (6th ed.). Needham: Simon & Schuster, Inc.
- Bekoe, A. A. (2012, May 14). When wife killing herald Mother’s Day. *Daily Graphic* (No. 18840), p. 11.
- Benokraitis, N. V. (2008). *Marriages and families: Changes, choices, and constraints* (6th ed.). New Jersey: Pearson Prentice, Inc.
- Bryant, C. M., Rand, D. C., & Jennifer, M. M. (2001). The influence of in-laws on changes in marital success. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 63 (3), 614-626.
- Casper, L. M., & Bianchi, S. M. (2011). Courtship and marriage. In A. H. Skolnick, & J. H. Skolnick (Eds.), *Family in transition* (16th ed.), (pp. 161-172). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Esere, M. O., & Salihu, O. N. (2013). Communication styles and marital adjustment of married adults in Kwara state, Nigeria. *Journal of Counselling and Psychology*, 3 (2) 34-50.

- Eshlesman, J. R., & Wilson, S. J. (1995). *The family*. Scarborough, Ontario: Allyn and Bacon Canada.
- Essuman, J. K. (2010). *Marital satisfaction inventory*. Cape Coast: Counselling Centre, UCC.
- Feldman, R. S. (1996). *Understanding psychology* (4th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Gary, R. C. (2007). *Christian counselling: A comprehensive guide* (3rd ed.). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.
- Ghana Statistical Service (2012). *2010 Population and Housing Census*. Accra: Sakoa Press Limited.
- Haseley, J. L. (2006). *Marital satisfaction among newly married couples: Associations with religiosity and romantic attachment style*. Unpublished Doctoral thesis, University of North Texas, Texas.
- Henslin, J. M. (2003). *Sociology: A down-to-earth approach* (6th ed.). New York: Allyn and Bacon.
- Heward-Mills, D. (2012). *Model marriage: A marriage counselling handbook*. Benin City: Hosanna Christian Bookshop and publishing House.
- Keesling, B. (2006). *Sexual healing: The completest guide to overcoming common sexual problems* (3rd ed.). Alameda: Hunter House Inc.
- Leedy, P. D., & Ormrod, J. E. (2010). *Practical research: Planning and design* (9th ed.). New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Les, P., & Leslie, P. (2001). *Saving your second marriage before it starts*. Michigan: Zondervan.
- Macionis, J. J. (2001). *Sociology* (8th ed.). New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc.
- Maciver, J. E., & Dimkpa, D. I. (2012). Factors influencing marital stability. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(1), 437-442.
- Marshall, W. L., & Firestone, P. (Eds.). (1999). *Abnormal psychology perspectives*. Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc.
- Millan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2001). *Research in education: A conceptual introduction* (5 ed.). New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.
- Nacino-Brown, R., Oke, F. E., & Brown, D. P. (1990). *Curriculum and instruction: An introduction to methods of teaching*. London: Macmillan Education Ltd.
- Navrongo Health and Demographic Surveillance System (2010). *Data*. Navrongo: NHRC.
- Nwoye, A. (1991). *Marriage and family counselling*. Jos: Fab Education Books.
- Olukoya, D. K. (2012). *100 reasons why sex must wait until marriage*. Lagos: Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries.
- Oxford Dictionary. (1998). *D K Oxford Dictionary*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Papalia, D. E., Olds, S. W., & Feldman, R. D. (2002). *A child's world: Infancy through adolescence* (9th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Rice, F. P. (1999). *Intimate relationships, marriage, and families* (4th ed.). MountainView: Mayfield Publishing Company.
- Sabini, J. (1992). *Social psychology*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co. Ltd.
- Sarafino, E. P. (2002). *Health psychology: Biopsychosocial interactions* (4th ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Schwartz, M. A., & Scott, B. M. (2003). *Marriages and families* (4th ed.). New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc.
- Tawiah, E. F., & Andoh, C. (2014, January 28). Woman sets family ablaze, because of jealousy. *Daily Graphic* (No.19369), p. 3.
- Thompson, W. E., & Hickey, J. V. (1999). *Society in focus: Introduction to sociology* (3rd ed.). New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.
- Wiggins, J. A., Wiggins, B. B., & Zanden, J. V. (1994). *Social psychology*. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.
- Williams, B. K., Sawyer, S. C., & Wahlstrom, C. M. (2005). *Divorce*. Retrieved January 15,2013, from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/divorce>.
- Wireko, V. (2012, May 16). Rampant family tragedies. *Daily Graphic* (No. 18842), p.7.
- Wortman, C. B., Loftus, E. F., & Marshall, M. (1992). *Psychology* (4th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.